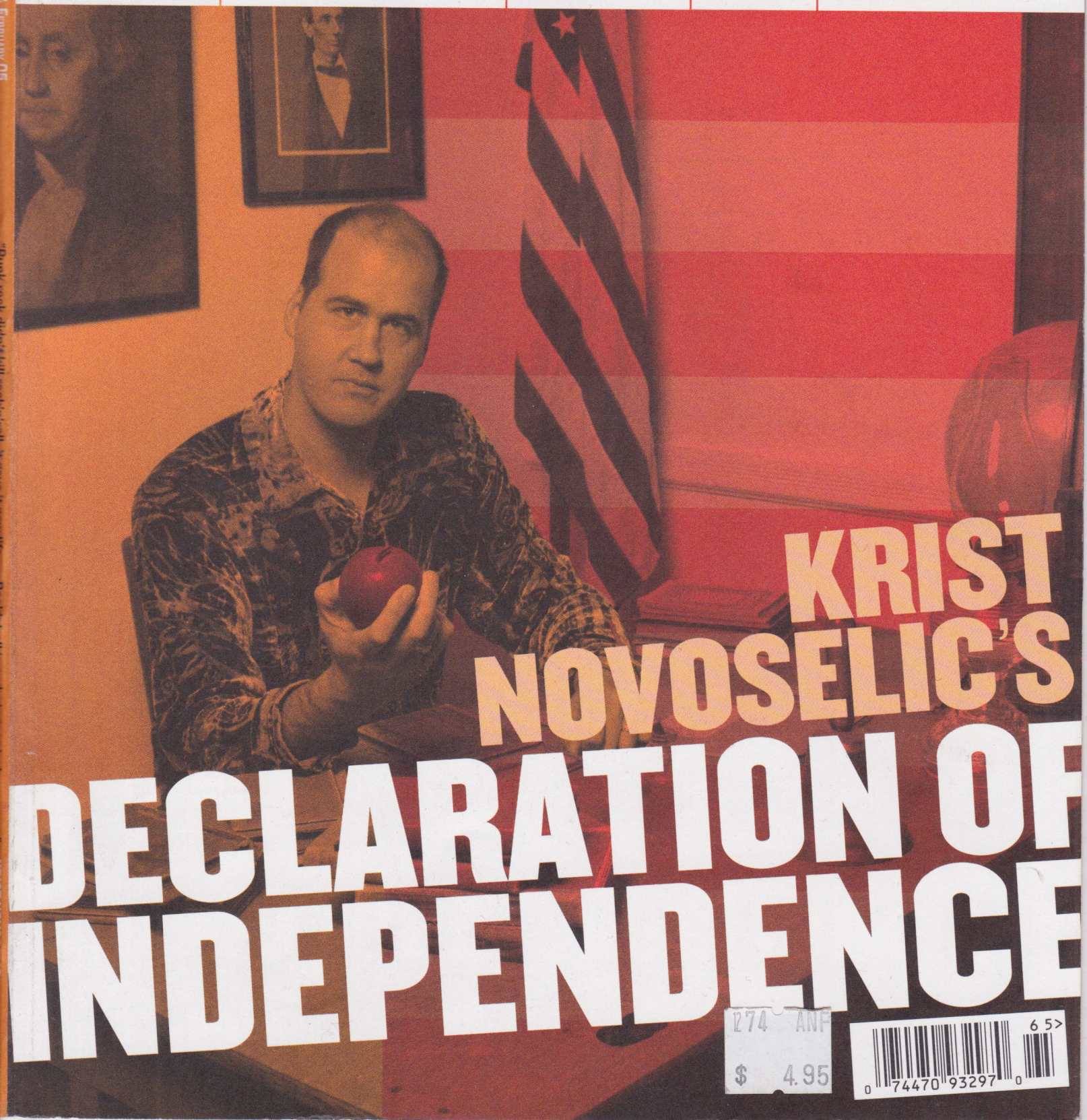


punk planet

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notes from underground

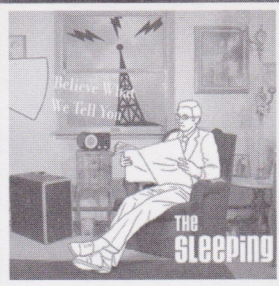
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KRIST NOVOSELIC'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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The Sleeping > Believe What We Tell You

With 3/5 of skycamel falling in their lineup and former vocalist for NJ's Stillwell, The Sleeping aren't meant to be taken lightly and their debut album "Believe What We Tell You" says exactly that. The sleeping enlisted Mike Birnbaum and Chris Bittner (of Coheed and Cambria/Anberlin fame) to both engineer and produce "Believe What We Tell You." Laced with lush harmonies, melodic and driving guitar lines, and pummeling breakdowns, The Sleeping push the envelope in every genre they can be compared to. This album is recommended for fans of Thrice, Taking Back Sunday, and Brand New.

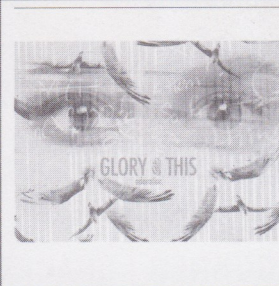
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With Honor/The Distance > Split

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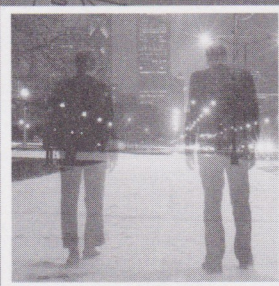
-Martyr Records



Glory Of This > Adoration

One listen to "Adoration" and you will be hooked, from it's catchy melodies and riffs to it's towering breakdowns, this is an instant classic. Throw it in your back pack. Recommended for fans of Finch, Static Lullaby, From Autumn to Ashes, and Dead Poetic.

-Indianola Records



The Firebird Band > The City At Night

Chris Broach (Braid, L'Spearow, Life at Sea) and John Isberg (The Blackouts) have composed a dark, mood laden, soundtrack for the class of 3020's art school prom. The perfect balance of electronic experimentation and driving organic instrumentation make "The City At Night" a timeless masterpiece of an album.

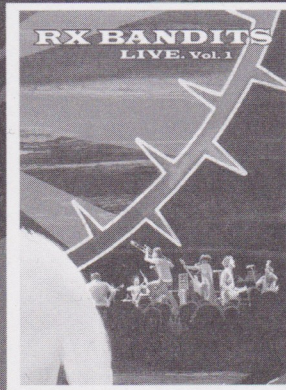
-Bifocal Media



Razor Crusade > Infinite Water

"Infinite Water" is an awe inspiring and passionate collection of songs. Calling to a simpler time, when bands wrote music merely for expression's sake. Evoking thoughts of their direct influences (Quicksand, Helmet, Refused, etc) while still carving out their own unique place within the hardcore community and beyond.

-Deathwish Inc.



RX Bandits > Live. Vol. 1

This DVD is a documentation of footage from over a year worth of RxBandits shows with the majority of focus being placed on three benefit concerts performed at Chain Reaction in 2003. With over two hours of footage from the three shows as well as bonus "bootleg" videos, a picture gallery, and a very rare acoustic set, it offers a glimpse into the unique action and positivity that can only truly be captured through their live experience.

-Mashdown Babylon

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PP65

"I TRY TO BE FAIR AND TRY NOT TO MAKE TOO MANY JUDGEMENTS WITH MY PHOTOGRAPHY, BUT IN SOME WAYS YOU CAN'T HELP IT. AS THE LATE RICHARD AVEDON SAID: 'ALL PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ACCURATE, NONE IS THE TRUTH.'"

— STEPHANIE SINCLAIR

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Watching the Found Footage Festival; the Bananas get split; the PTA has a Coke and a smile; a memorial to the Iraq dead; more.

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the risks

intro65

N The Day After

NOVEMBER 3, 2004—This isn't really a normal introduction to an issue of *Punk Planet*. But the presidential election ended just a few hours ago, and nothing really feels all that normal. The rest of this magazine has been at our printer for two days; we craftily held off sending this introduction until after the election so that I could write a few words about the great work that all of you—all of us—did in helping to create a lasting difference in the US.

But, as any smart gambler will tell you, don't stake your bets on winning. And now, here I am trying to interpret an event that I honestly can't get my head around, in part because I'm so exhausted from spending the last four years trying to ensure it wouldn't happen. I want to give you words of hope, words of encouragement, words to take with you during these dark times. But all I can offer you is this: a magazine assembled during the last days of a time when it seemed like fundamental change was within our reach. Maybe you can find the hope that we all so desperately need somewhere within these pages—because there is a lot in there.

Hope comes in the massive frame of Krist Novoselic, from the seminal band

Nirvana, who has decided to put down his bass and pick up a pen, writing an amazing book about electoral reform. If you can take one thing away from the latest election debacle, it's that we need a change: not from the Bush administration, true as that may be; not from milquetoast candidates like John Kerry, although that may also be a certainty; but we need a change from the way we vote. Novoselic certainly feels that a change is necessary, and the path that has lead him from a small town in Washington to the top of the Billboard charts—to speaking out independently for new ways of thinking about elections, is one that I find inspiring.

Hope also comes in the form of Stephanie Sinclair, a photographer who risks her life every day to document the Iraq war; it comes in the form of Francisco Ramirez, a Chicago punk stalwart, staring down cancer and winning; it comes in the form of Microcosm publishing, the Blow, Pig Destroyer, and the many others sharing their stories in these pages. Because, ultimately, that's all we can do: Share our stories and remember that they, too, count.

Perhaps that's the thing to remember at this uncertain time: that we all do still count and that we all can change

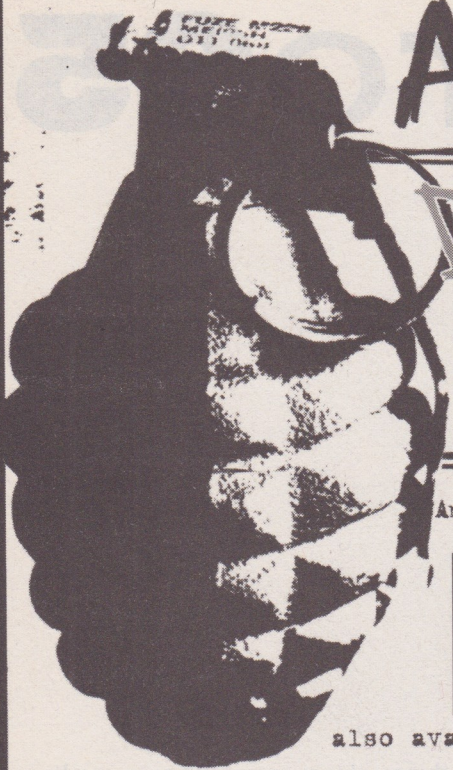
things—things in ourselves, in our lives, in our communities, and, eventually, in our country. But change takes time. And it is not easy. Right now it may be enough just to remember that it is possible.

I wish it was under brighter circumstances that I welcomed the multi-talented Anne Elizabeth Moore to our staff. Anne comes from Seattle to Chicago to take on the mantle of associate publisher. Her years of experience—she worked at the *Comics Journal* and founded her own magazine, *Matte*—and volumes of knowledge and expertise come at just the right time here. With so many ventures taking off, so many promising new ideas, and, frankly, with the reality of four more years of battles to wage, it's great to have such capable hands in our corner.

Here's to four more years of fighting—we will rest once we're dead.

DAN

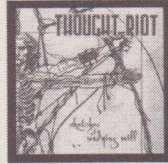
PS. I find that the new Ted Leo album, *Shake the Sheets*, applied in liberal doses, helps to dull the pain just a little.



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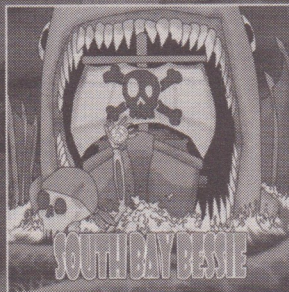
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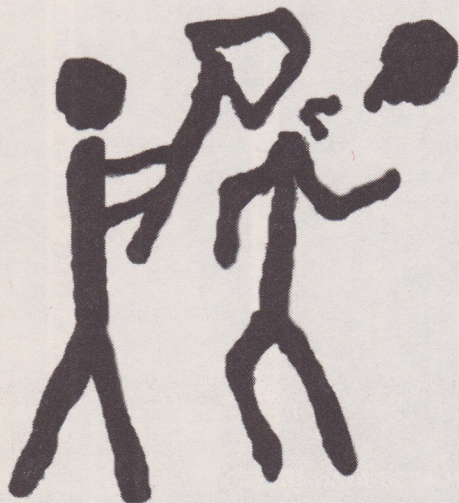
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mail64

Not-so-Queer as not-so-fuck.

► To The Editor:

Upon receiving Issue 64 and reading the eye-catching "new queer radicalism" headline, I flipped quickly to page 78, only to be sorely disappointed. "Queer as fuck" was just about that—not surprising, not new, and definitely not radical.

The only voice in the piece that spoke from a place of radical queerness was that of Matilda who spoke about queerness as a starting place from which to work on fighting numerous oppressions such as racism, classism, sexism, ageism and ablism (among others). Outing gay Republicans does not change the national debate. Queer famous people do not make for a queer revolution. If the only thing activists are trying to do is to make LGBTSTI people acceptable to the mainstream, or make sure that folks know their representative is calling 1-800-GAYMALE, then we are not headed towards change, just towards assimilation (for those that have the right race, class, education, etc.)

More importantly, I was disappointed in the article because I expected so much more. I expected an amazing article on some group similar to the Audre Lourde Project or FIERCE here in New York—both queer people of color led radical community-based

organizations who have more on their agenda than making queerness acceptable or being able to marry. I expected something that challenged my assumptions around queerness, radicalness and activism. I wasn't expecting something my mother had heard about already. I was expecting independent media to cover something that deserves to be talked about in more circles—something that isn't being covered by the mainstream media because it is pushing the limits of activism and creating change and community. I hope in the future, *Punk Planet* queer articles can be an alternative to the BS we are fed by HBO and Cinemax assimilationist series.

In Queerness,

KT

Letters from the Swing State Poster Project.

► The night of November 1, *Punk Planet*, in conjunction with the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, *Clamor*, and *In These Times*, sent crews of people out into the streets to hang political posters in swing states. Not only did we mail out hundreds of donated posters with donated funds, we also had posters available to download at www.punkplanet.com/swingstate. The outpouring of support from volunteer designers, hangers, financial donors, and well-wishers made our election eve electioneering a rousing success.

► You guys and gals are awesome. The passion that you all have for change is what we need more of in this country.

Henry Contreras, via e-mail

► I'm in VT and know NH is swingin'. Have you heard from any other New Englanders interested in posterin' NH? Are you concentrating on the other states but affable to the idea of NH posterin'? Let me know yer stance on it, I think New Hampshireites could use the push and I'll hang the posters. Thanks so much for organizing this . . . I'm excited to hang 'em. A real presence in this swingin' state.

Kendra, via e-mail

► Send me a copy of each of the posters and I'll find a way to make more here. Winona is slowly movin' in the right direction. There are mad campaign sign wars going on right now in Winona. The punks don't even have anything to do with it. College kids, high schoolers, elementary kids; they're all fighting about this election. It's crazy. Just this week someone went around and stole a bunch of Bush/Cheney signs out of peoples yards, cut them up and made a huge sign that said "No Bush" and hung it from the interstate bridge.

Katie Mae, via e-mail

► Hey, I'm in FL in St. Augustine, a town of old money and rednecks (Bush supporters), and artists and surfers

who need to vote for Kerry. I'd like to help with the poster-hanging process as I feel it is my duty as an aggressively anti-Bush hopeful. Anything to help,

Peter Oliver, via e-mail

► I live in East Lansing, MI, a short drive away from our state capital and near a thriving university. Surprisingly, I see a lot of pro-Bush hype; needless to say, I am a little concerned. I would like to get involved in putting up posters—around campus, with supportive local merchants, around the capital, etc. If you need it, I'd happily contribute to the fund, too. Please, let me know what I can do to help—I realize there precious little time left, but whatever I can do, I will. Thanks!

Derek Fricano, via e-mail

► I am hoping through this project to do more than hang some posters. I would like to gather up all us "progressives" who are sick of what's been going on in our names to work for something better than Bush or Kerry, regardless of who gets elected (or into the WhiteHouse, which seems to be a different matter), because we've all got some serious pressuring to do to get a better situation going in Iraq as well as countless other areas of the globe. Thanks to all of you for giving a damn!

Alycia, via e-mail

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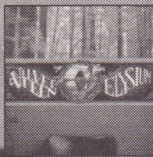
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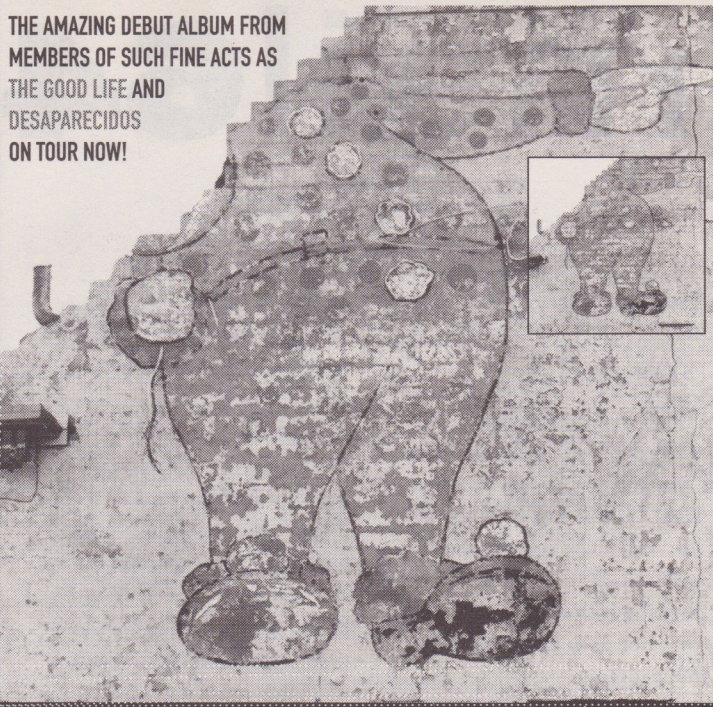
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"Celebrity exercise videos are always good."

FAST-FORWARDING THROUGH THE BEST OF BAD VIDEOS WITH THE FOUND FOOTAGE FESTIVAL.

In general, the first day of a new job or a day spent in traffic school isn't much fun. Well, Nick Prueher, Joe Pickett and Geoff Haas, would disagree—this is where they get their kicks. For over 10 years, they've been obsessed with collecting some of the worst moments ever captured on video. Imagine a training video for Wendy's circa 1985 in which a jive-talking genie introduces a trainee to the magic of hamburger-making using rhymes that sound suspiciously similar to the Super Bowl Shuffle—Prueher, Pickett, and Haas have seen it. This is just the tip of the iceberg of their collection and this year they're taking their obsession on the road as the Found Footage Festival (FFF). Think *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, but replace the crappy sci-fi flicks with even crappier instructional videos, home videos and anything else they and their vast network of loyal video hunters can find or steal. Their collection of videographic oddities may be coming to your town soon. *Punk Planet* caught up with the founders, after the FFF premiered in New York.

How did you get interested in found videotapes?

Nick: I started collecting found videotapes in 1991. I was working for McDonald's and I stumbled across a training video entitled *Inside and Outside Custodial Duties*. I was hooked immediately—we started looking for videos anywhere we could: thrift stores, garage sales, warehouses, dumpsters. Since then, Geoff, Joe, and I have compiled an impressive collection of strange, outrageous, and colossally stupid videos.

Joe: When we really started to get into it, I just couldn't get enough. I took a couple jobs—one at Toys R Us, the other at Suncoast Video—for the express purpose of seeing their training videos. I showed up, worked a four-hour shift, stole a stack of training videos, went home and duped them. I'd return them the next day along with my resignation. That's the hard way to get video; there are better ways to get about it.

How did the idea for the FFF come together?

Geoff: Joe and I worked together for a number of years at a film rental company that did tape duplication on the side. That's when we started the Cine-Magic Video Club. We'd copy stuff that came in and then we'd send out compilation tapes of hilarious clips we had found to all our friends, asking them to send us any good stuff they might have in return. At one point we were thinking of doing a one-time screening of the best of the video club and calling it the "Copyright Infringement Fest." Eventually Joe and Nick picked up this idea and found a more litigation-friendly title and did the first ever Found Footage Festival in New York to raise funds for a documentary they're working on. The event was such a success we decided to see if we could take it further and do more screenings.

How do you judge what found footage is FFF material?

Nick: We know it when we see it. I guess the first criterion is that the videos have to be legitimately found—or stolen—we don't discriminate there.

And secondly, they have to be funny.

Geoff: Training and instructional videos are the bread and butter of the FFF.

Joe: Home movies are a score, but they tend to feature little kids and long Christmas scenes. Celebrity exercise videos are always good. The best videos are ones that totally take us by surprise. But you can never judge a bad video by its cover. Like last week, Nick found a video in the garbage with the words "Bonion Surgery" scribbled on the label in pencil. We had hoped for some sort of gruesome home surgery but, alas, it was taped off The Learning Channel. We were disappointed.

What do you think is the best found video in your arsenal?

Nick: I don't think I'll ever get tired of Jack Rebney—a collection of outtakes from the extremely angry host of a promotional video for Winnebago RVs. The crew must have realized early on that the guy was hot-headed, because they decided to leave the camera running in between takes. This video is so funny that it makes people cry.



"We just got called geniuses!"

INSIDE THE FUNNY, THOUGHTFUL, AND BIZARRE WORLD OF THE BANANAS.

Modern music is all about the chorus—that catchy, repeated series of word and music—becoming our own personal anthem. Sacramento punk band the Bananas have easily mastered the concept and it shows on their album, *Nautical Rock'n' Roll*, which is outstanding in its bombastic, spastic, and unforgettable refrains. Give a spin to the song "Nautical Theme" (a love poem penned about a love affair with a mermaid) and it will occupy your CD player permanently.

What makes the Bananas so stellar is how these booming choruses, arranged with thoughtful lyrics, intricate bass lines, snappy drum beats, and jazzy guitar work, begin to actually make you *think*." Mike (singer and guitarist), Marie (bass player), and Scott (drummer) answered some questions about the band.

I've heard that you all work as window-washers—true or false?

Scott: It's a well known fact, at least in Sacramento, that we all met at the Sacramento Valley Window Washing Academy and that, since then, have all held down some sweet window-washing gigs. However, while washing windows in Sac may sound glamorous, you can't let it go to your head. If you do, you're doomed to look down and realize you're like three stories up.

Geoff: There are so many to choose from. I think that the McDonald's training video McC is the epitome of what we're looking for. It's about an hour long and I can't imagine I've seen it less than 50 times. It's the perfect training video: so sincere in its intention and completely insane in its execution. John and Johnny is always a big hit—this is just some footage from a rural Wisconsin home shopping show called America's Value Network, but the hosts, John and Johnny, are totally out of their minds. They have this manic onscreen presence and they're drenched in sweat throughout the entire video. They sell a bunch of crappy junk, and they are clearly making up all kinds of nonsense about the products.

They're almost as desperate as they are disingenuous.

Nick: We're always looking for new found videos to play at the festival. We urge anyone who's got any found gems sitting in their closet to send them our way. Every entry we receive is reviewed and returned within four weeks. Plus, we reward each entrant with a compilation of some of our best finds in return.

What's the worst—or creepiest—video that you show in the FFF?

Nick: We found a video called AMS Ambicor Prosthesis, which is an instructional video for a penile implant. The close-ups of the graying, withered penis and balls aren't pleasant to look at, but we've included them in the festival

lineup anyway. Now everyone can be permanently haunted by these images.

Joe: I haven't been creeped out by a video, yet. I almost gagged during an instructional video where a guy dressed

like a pimp teaches you how to filet catfish—the catfish are still alive while being ripped apart—but that's more grossed out than creeped out.

—Cate Levinson

Check out the FFF website—www.foundfootagefestival.com.

Coke—it does a body... good?

WHAT'S COCA-COLA DOING BUDDYING UP TO THE NATIONAL PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION?

When the senior vice president of public affairs for Coca-Cola, John H. Downs, joined the National Parent-Teacher Association last year, Gary Ruskin's ears pricked up.

Ruskin is the Executive Director of Commercial Alert, an organization co-founded

by Ralph Nader to cease commercial culture's exploitation of youth. The Board of Advisors—which includes such respected figures from diverse backgrounds as teacher John Taylor Gatto, Juliet Schor, author of *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child*, and vice president of the Seattle school board

Mike: The only amazing window-washing story I can think of right now is that once it took me almost an hour to get out this crazy smudge.

Marie: Yeah, it becomes old hat after a while. Although that *was* a crazy smudge. It looked like peanut butter but stuck like glue.

Tell me what inspired "Nautical Theme," a love song about falling for a mermaid. It is delightful and the act of geniuses.

Mike: Believe it or not, that song was actually inspired by a true story.

Scott: We just got called *geniuses*!

The rumor is that there aren't any decent music venues in Sacramento, which means you guys end up playing a lot of house parties. How does playing in someone's front room or basement affect the kind of music you make?

Mike: I wouldn't say it's had much effect on the type of music we play, but it has enabled us, over the years, to accumulate a lot of silverware and stereo equipment that doesn't *technically* belong to us.

Marie: We're on a first-name basis with most of the cops in town.

Scott: The rumor of no good venues is pretty close to the truth, though I think the real story is that there's no specifically punk-minded place to do shows. I mean, we could probably play a show a month in Sac at one of the two or three bars that'll have us, but when touring bands call us and ask for a show, it's not like we can just say "Oh yeah, here's your show!" Sac's not all that flexible. But

I will say, if you come through and happen to get on a good show here, it's really fun.

Why is Plan-It-X Records so vitally important to a band like the Bananas? Do you feel smaller labels like Plan-It-X can actually contend with the monolithic corporate entities?

Scott: I don't think of Plan-It-X in any other terms than "they asked us to do a record and it seemed like a good idea." I had no idea that it would become kind of a real label that bands actually *wanted* to be on, I just had a good feeling about it when Chris asked us to make a record. He took us more seriously than we did. He made it sound like a Bananas CD would truly, actually, come out! It's cool to watch Plan-It-X become the self-sufficient thing that I think he wanted it to be. Of course the label doesn't want to contend with the corporate monoliths. I think they have more fun existing despite them.

What can you tell me about some of the new songs for the new album?

Mike: Sloppy guitars, drunken drumming, far out-bass, and nassally vocals.

Scott: You've already said too much!

Mike: Just more of the same.

Scott: The same *genius*, that is. —Joe Meno

Check out the Banana's fantastic album *Nautical Rock 'N' Roll* at www.plan-it-x.com.

Brita Butler-Wall—has lead the group in drafting legislative agendas on stopping childhood obesity and reducing in-school advertising, protesting the sale of naming rights to corporations, and attempting to eliminate Channel One from schools across the nation. With a pedigree like this, it's no surprise the organization called foul when Downs joined the PTA.

So John H Downs probably didn't realize what he was in for by agreeing to become a national board director for the PTA. Now, approximately a year into his two-year term, he's left the board—but the corporate influence he brought remains.

The PTA knew what they were in for when Downs

joined, however. The organization, based in Chicago, accepted Coca-Cola sponsorship (and accompanying funds) and features the soda company's logo on its website in several places. This, despite a mission that describes the PTA as "the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the United States. A not-for-profit association of parents, educators, students, and other citizens active in their schools and communities, PTA is a leader in reminding our nation of its obligations to children." Indeed, the PTA lists sponsors proudly on their website (others have included Alliant Credit Union and Microsoft), and thanks them "for their support and dedication to our nation's children."

Coca-Cola's dedication to children is certainly unflinching. A \$150 million Coke marketing campaign in conjunction with the first Harry Potter film in the midst of a three-year sales slump indicates how important the youth market is to Coca-Cola Enterprises.

The same is true with Coke's sugary rivals. Pepsi spokesperson Larry Jablonsky even admitted to *The Nation* in 1998 that their "core market is the teen and young adult set." As a result, school districts have accepted funding of more than \$10 million each in exchange for exclusive pouring rights of either Coke or Pepsi on campus.

"We encourage positive choices about physical fitness, lifestyle and nutrition," Coca-Cola's website states,

willfully ignoring that the company manufactures an addictive and destructive product found to be extremely harmful—and marketed heavily—to youth. Caffeine, which causes excess excretions of calcium and magnesium, can actually stunt your growth, a problem made worse by kids' disinterest in milk or other calcium-rich foods. Common childhood afflictions such as ear infections, asthma, and bronchitis can be exacerbated by carbonation and caffeine, according to Dr. William Cochran of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Perhaps even more egregious in this age of rampant Ritalin prescriptions, Mitchell Schare of Hofstra University even did a study of soda-, coffee- and iced tea-drinking



"Music for me sounds more like what my paintings have always been like."

ABSTRACTING THE SOUND OF TARENTEL.

"We've got a few things we've done lately that are like pop, but it's fucking noise at the same time. It's like catchy noise." Jefre Cantu-Ledesma says, playing a rough mix of Tarentel's recent recording sessions. Two days earlier the band—Cantu-Ledesma, Danny Grody, and Jim Redd—had a homecoming show in San Francisco after a West Coast trip with Mono and Montreal's Fly Pan Am. On stage, Tarentel blended into their projected visuals, a shifting backdrop of nature and abstractions by filmmaker Paul Clipson ("It's the whole idea of the music and the visuals being interchangeable, like one big amoeba that just moves together, which I think is nice," Cantu-Ledesma says). Instead of individual live antics, the band concentrates on their intricate system of knobs, wires, instrumentation, and software that allows them to experiment as they perform, running drums through guitar amps and playing taped clarinet over and around the live version. Their layered, instrumental music, both live and recorded, is not immaculately planned, but isn't wholly improvised either. I sat down with the band to discuss their process and the line between art and music.

youth nearly a decade ago that concluded, "the effects of caffeine can potentially mimic ADHD and be misdiagnosed as ADHD."

But can this all be the fault of one board member? One wonders. When asked what the precise connection is between Coke and the PTA, Ruskin not only points out the corporate sponsorship, but sees a more dangerous connection in the realization that, "the National PTA doesn't seem to have a position on the marketing of Coke. They don't actually do anything to stop marketing in the schools. One thing that Coke money could buy is inaction from our nation's largest parents' group," Ruskin asserts.

While such a claim may seem far-fetched, Coke's no stranger to ingenious marketing techniques, one of which was the cleverly titled "H₂NO"

campaign, which disallowed water to be served at Olive Garden restaurants without specific customer request. Diners were given several other beverage-purchasing options—many handily supplied by Coca-Cola—to complete their casual dining experience. To everyone's glee (except, perhaps, the customer's), beverage sales increased dramatically. Olive Garden claimed at the time to be concerned exclusively with a reduction in water use.

In October, Senator Edward M Kennedy introduced the Prevention of Childhood Obesity Act in response to current youth nutritional studies. In the last few years, obesity has become one of the most prevalent dangers facing our nation's youth. The Harvard School of Public Health and the Department of

Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital jointly conducted a study that found a direct link between a child's risk for obesity and soda consumption: for each 12-ounce soda consumed daily (and keep in mind, most schools only have the 20-ounce versions available on campus nowadays), the potential for obesity increases by more than half. Obesity itself is further linked to a recent

increase in adult-onset diabetes in children.

While the connection between the PTA and Coca-Cola Enterprises—which Ruskin claims is "obviously institutional corruption"—has diminished since Downs left the board, the connection between soda and childhood health problems has not.

—Anne Elizabeth Moore

For more info, go to www.commercialalert.org.

"Alternative cartoonists seem to like bacon."

SPX: FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE COMICS—AND MEAT.

Squeezing 2,400 comics fans into a Holiday Inn might not sound like such a great idea, but if the event in question is the Small Press Expo, it was a stroke of genius. SPX 2004, held October 1-3

in Bethesda, MD, is no ordinary comic book convention. It's not crawling with aging fans stuffed into ill-fitting Spider-Man costumes; SPX is all about comics as an art form. Many of the books are

Your songs feel less structured and more improvised. Is that your approach to it—improv?

Jefre: It's not improv with a capital "I." It's a more modest version of improv.

Jim: It's us trying to do improv the best we can without going over the line into cliché. It's more like a non-sequential or non-linear way of doing things. Things don't have to be rational and make perfect sense, and go A-B-C-D-E. We've all been playing music together for a while, and we all came to a point recently where it just doesn't make sense to rehearse all of this stuff over and over again. We can do whatever the fuck we want and it's going to end up making sense because of the formula we've set up.

Jefre: There's definitely a formula, that's the thing. I think even improv music is formulaic now. We don't just say "Oh, whatever's happening is happening." We think more about how things should move. It's more like painting—like abstract painting.

So it's no coincidence that you're visual artists, too?

Jefre: Right, and I think that the music for me sounds more like what my paintings have always been like. It took a long time for us to get to that point, but since we have it's been like lightning speed. When we said, "Maybe we shouldn't try to write songs," I

swear to god, I was scared. I didn't know if I could do that, or if I was interested in doing that. But the more we started doing it, the more it started making sense. You have to develop trust. Now there's this sense that there are no more bad sounds anymore.

Jim: Everything has its place. It's about what happens right before and right after. So if someone else is listening and they hear this sound out of context, they do something in relation to it, and it becomes in context.

Jefre: Right. We all do whatever we feel the music calls for, and it's much more comfortable now. I used to get really stressed. The music before was so immaculate; it was about articulation and subtlety and dynamics. We still have those things, but it's not totally reliant on that. The bottom's not going to drop out if someone forgets their part. ¶ It could be something different in a year—we could challenge ourselves and say let's write 10 songs with parts and make a record. But when we play live, it's great to make it huge-sounding, and to make the music really physical. The music has to fill the space. You're kind of watching it and it's unimportant what we're doing as individuals. This whole new thing sort of emerges, which is hopefully like an entity, something you're watching—Mick Jagger or something. —Katie Richstatter

Get arty at www.tarentel.com.

beautifully crafted, like Gary Panter's *Jimbo in Purgatory*, an expansive volume encased in red binding with a gold leaf trim about a modern-day primitive, who lives in a post-punk version of Dante's *Inferno*.

Bazaar Love Triangle, a three-part mini comic about a torrid affair between a genie, a camel, and a terrorist published by Global Hobo, comes folded into a pyramid and wrapped in a silkscreen cover.

The first SPX was held in 1994. Since then, it's moved from the Ramada Inn to the Holiday Inn, taken time out for 9/11, and almost been shut down by Hurricane Floyd one year. Along the way, it's also developed into a showcase for people who just love to make comics. Publishers like Top Shelf, Alternative Comics, and Fantagraphics all say that SPX is one of their most profitable

shows of the year, as indie comics fans line up to buy the latest buzz books. Sales rival those at the San Diego Comic-Con, which is considered the behemoth of the field. This year's SPX attendance was a record.

Nearly 200 cartoonists from all walks of life descended on Bethesda this year to sell their wares, swap, talk shop, and drink free beer. The participants ranged from big shots like Mike Mignola, the creator of *Hellboy*, to Robyn Chapman, whose hand-made edition *Hey Four Eyes* quickly sold out of its 80-copy run.

SPX organizers recognize the independent ethic of the show and understand that only a handful of people can make a living selling their comics. So it's only natural that the organizers provide free lunch, which the artists in attendance eagerly

snatched up this year. "Alternative cartoonists seem to like bacon," said one, seeing that the tray was empty yet again.

SPX is a must-see for anyone who cares about art. The new generation of cartoonists owes nothing to the schlocky

material of the past. Nourished on a pure diet of Dan Clowes, R Crumb, and Adrian Tomine, they're charting new territories in both content and production. The small press never looked so big.

—Heidi MacDonald

"People need a reason to piss in their pants, and I personally feel the entertainment business is doing a poor job."

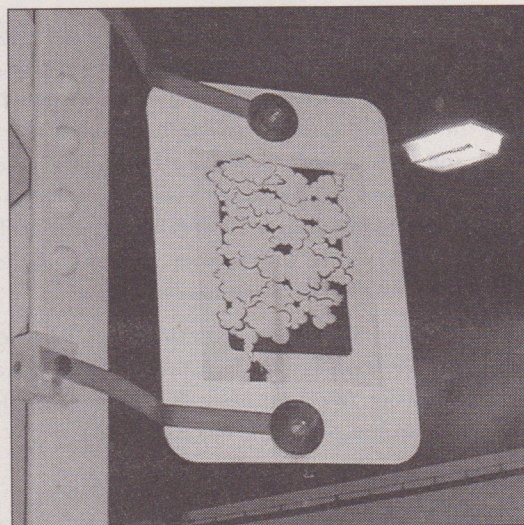
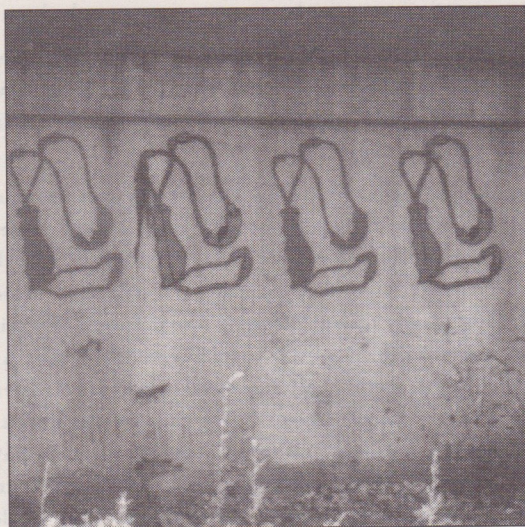
FILMMAKER ERIC FENSLE'S REMIXES OF GI JOE ARE A HOT COMMODITY ON THE INTERNET—AND MAY JUST GET HIM SUED BY HASBRO.

When Eric Fensler rediscovered the Public Service Announcements that marked the conclusion of his favorite childhood TV cartoon, *GI Joe*, he decided it was time for those

"Real American Heroes" to make a comeback. He took the old cartoon footage and, using his powers of videographic manipulation, he altered the sequencing and dubbed over the old dialogue

GALLERY: Everyday Art

ARTWORK BY JOSH MACPHEE



with his own. The result was a series—25 in all—of wildly funny, ridiculous short films.

After generating a zealous following via the Internet, the *GI Joe* PSAs have shown at several underground film festivals around the country. In 2003, both *Indiewire* and *Reverseshot* recognized Fensler's shorts as some of the best of the year.

Unfortunately, the PSAs became a little too popular: In September, Fensler received a letter from Hasbro ordering him to cease and desist all distribution of the PSAs. Feeling uneasy about the unexpected attention, Fensler removed the PSAs from his website to avoid further threats from the corporation. *Punk Planet* caught up with Eric Fensler, to ask about the wacky shorts, because we sure as hell can't get enough of them.

When and why did you decide to make the *GI Joe* shorts?

Last year, I stumbled upon the *GI Joe* movie DVD that contained all 25 Public Service Announcements from the first and second season of the television series. I did four of them first, and had a laugh. So I said to myself, *why not do the rest?* Besides, why does anyone decide to do stuff? I had fun doing them; it's as simple as that. I felt that if these PSAs were presented now, this is what they would say.

Were you a big fan of the cartoon when you were a kid?

I owned the action figures, watched the show, the whole nine yards. I just instinctively started to mess with the footage, just like any weird video I find. I enjoy manipulating

film and video. Plus, I felt that *GI Joe* had been forgotten, and I wanted to see what our beloved American heroes were up to these days.

Did you get a bigger response than you expected?

I figured that only my close friends would see them, but they've gotten a *great* response. I didn't think that people would enjoy them as much as they did.

Did you think about how fair use or copyright laws would apply to the PSAs? Do you think they fall into the category of parody?

I thought I made a legitimate piece of satire. I only intended to make people giggle. I wasn't charging people money to see it, and I figured people would be able to tell the difference between the originals

and the ones I created. I wasn't prepared for [the letter from Hasbro]. I didn't know what my rights were, so I decided to take them off my website. Since I got the letter, I've read up on the issue. Based on the *Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music*—in which Acuff-Rose Music sued 2 Live Crew for their unlicensed parody of *Pretty Woman* and lost—you could say that the PSAs fit into fair use standards. There are other precedents as well, so I think I do have a case. Now, I just need time and money.

For many people our age, *GI Joe* is a cultural icon. The memories of PSAs are particularly vivid to me—I got all freaked out about skating for years after I saw the one where the kid fell through the ice. This is part of



Josh MacPhee is a Chicago-based street artist, designer, curator, activist, and author of the Soft Skull Press release, *Stencil Pirates*. His stunning, simplistic graphics work can be found on streets and walls throughout the country and at www.justseeds.org.

the reason why your short films resonate with so many people: it says a lot about how we absorb mass media, and continue to process it throughout our lives. So if the point from the beginning was to make an impression on little kids, how can Hasbro get their panties in a bunch 20 years later, when one of those kids grows up and makes a mutant version of one of their cartoons?

No idea. They never answered my calls, nor have they returned my messages. I think it has to do with their image. The people at Hasbro may have felt that I was making them look bad. If you ask me, the cartoon was dead and I was hoping to bring it back to life, in a way. I ended up doing some good: people had a good

laugh. People need a reason to piss in their pants, and I personally feel the entertainment business is doing a poor job.

What does the cease-and-desist letter mean for your work?

It means I can't host those films anymore. I may put them up when I have the time and money to form a rebuttal against their claim. I'm thinking of setting up a petition, but as of now I'm hoping that the people at Hasbro actually take a look at them. Who knows—they might have a giggle. Other than that, I'm onto the next thing. Hopefully my next project won't offend or bother anyone, and we won't have such problems.

—Cate Levinson

Check out Eric Fensler's work—but not the GI Joe films—at: www.fenslerfilm.com.

“She just sat down beside the boots and cried.”

EYES WIDE OPEN: A TRAVELLING MEMORIAL FOR THE IRAQ WAR DEAD.

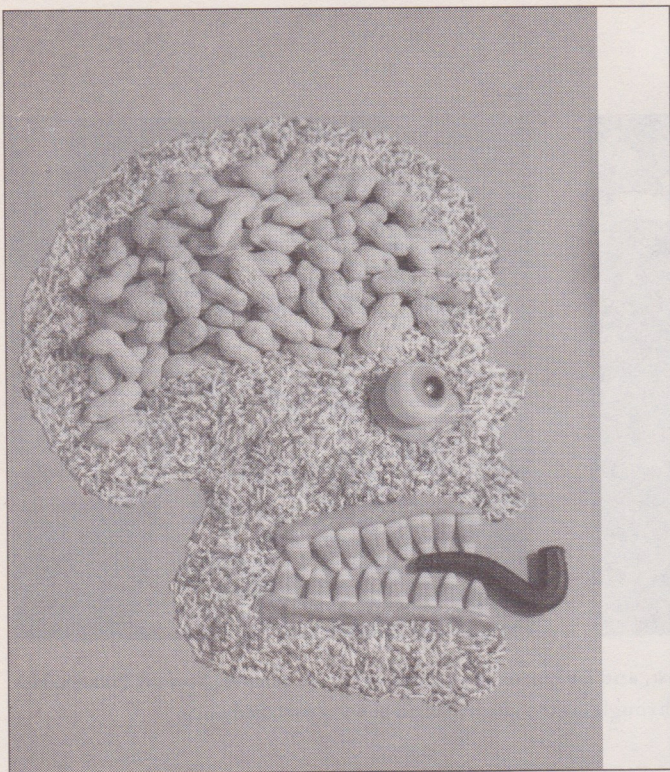
It's still a hard decision whether I should join the military or not. The thought of doing something for your country seems like a good thing to do and it sounds exciting. But walking through an exhibit that shows all the damage that the war is doing . . . saddens your heart.”

These words are scribbled into a visitor's book for *Eyes Wide Open*, a traveling memorial to the dead—both American and Iraqi—in a war that has been waged for nearly two years.

Eyes Wide Open is a project of the American Friends Service Committee, a pacifist or-

ganization started by Quakers to support conscientious objectors and provide assistance to refugees during WWI. The project is part exhibit and part memorial. There is a daunting grid of boots: one pair for every member of the US Military killed in Iraq. Each pair of boots has attached to it a tag with a man or woman's name, their age when they died, and their hometown. The boots are arranged by state. Friends, family members, and strangers leave notes, flowers, and pictures.

Scattered at the edges of the memorial are sneakers



"Kids live in a rich fantasy world, that's what I'm doing."

TAKING A TRIP TO THE AMAZING UNIVERSE OF OBJECT-ANIMATOR PES.

I first encountered the work of object-animator PES when I watched *Missing*, his entry in MoveOn.org's Bush in 30 Seconds contest. The focus of the ad is a rotating milk carton that displays a series of "missing" images: Osama Bin Laden, weapons of mass destruction, Florida Votes, an exit plan in Iraq, and finally Vice President Dick Cheney. The commercial ends with the tag line, "are we missing anything?"

His newest film, *KaBoom!*, is an exceptionally rich anti-war fantasy. It opens with a plane coming under fire by anti-aircraft guns. The plane is actually a blue toy plane flying over a cork world surrounded by a snowy landscape, which, under closer scrutiny, is actually a shag rug. *KaBoom!* concludes as the plane approaches a city, which is laid-out on top of circuit boards and made-up of salt and pepper shakers, flour sifters, tea strainers, a harmonica, drill bits, thimbles, a bullet, and other found objects. The plane drops a bomb—represented here by a peanut on the city, and the resulting explosion is denoted by a series of brightly colored Christmas ornaments.

PES and his producer/girlfriend Sarah Phelps invited me to visit them at their studio in New York City to talk about their films.

and dress shoes, representing Iraqi civilians killed in the war. Their names are written on a wall.

Then there is the exhibit, which includes images of the war and lesser-known facts about it, including a uniform donated by the family of Jeffrey Lucey, who hanged himself in his parents' basement one year after returning from duty in Iraq.

It is a lot to take in. But it is the boots, says Michael McConnell, the AFSC regional director who conceived of the project, that draw people in.

"I think it's the names and the ages that get to people," McConnell says. Visitors are always struck, he says, by how young the victims were. Standing in the midst of the boots, "even if they know the statistics,

they'll still say, 'I didn't know there were so many.'"

In Washington DC, a woman searched through the boots looking at each tag for her uncle's name. When she found it, McConnell remembers, "She just sat down beside the boots and cried."

Another visitor in Lansing, Michigan discovered the exhibition in the city's free weekly paper. On the cover was a drawing of a pair of boots and a tag bearing her son's name and age. Eyes Wide Open was in town. "It kind of freaked her out," McConnell says. She made her way to the memorial. "I walked through all the rows of the boots," she told the local organizers, "for all the mothers who are not here today."

In Taunton, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston, the

memorial was crammed into a church basement. The original plan had it in a park, but a handful of local vets protested its proximity to a Vietnam memorial. A Marine from Taunton, it turned out, was to be buried that day.

Organizer Noah Merrill was with Eyes Wide Open that day. "We went out and got a candle," Merrill remembers. "We had set out a pair of boots for this guy. We put them in the entryway and burned the candle next to those boots all day long."

"There were a lot of news crews in town covering the funeral and they stopped by. They were broadcasting news all day long." The fallen Marine's family caught one of those broadcasts and soon his pregnant widow, his sisters, and his mother were

coming down the stairs and into the church basement.

"The whole place was silent," Merrill recalls, "it was tomblike." The mother approached him. "My son is the Marine they buried today," she said, "so I guess I belong here."

Everybody was crying.

"A family buries a soldier and it's a very private sense of mourning," McConnell says. "This offers the nation a chance to do public mourning."

"The private questions that are raised are always 'Why my son or daughter?' or 'Why my husband or wife?' But the public questions are the political questions: why this war?"

"The next step," McConnell adds, "is not only stopping this war but stopping this idea that war is the answer." —Jeff Guntzel ©

To learn more about Eyes Wide Open and how to bring the traveling memorial to your town, visit: <http://afsc.org/eyes>.

What inspires you?

I find ideas everywhere I go: In a porn magazine I read at 3:00 a.m., in a Hieronymus Bosch image, in old toys and food. My work is all about putting objects into motion.

Why animate objects?

Look around: this is objectland. This place is *full* of familiar things, things that people, adults in particular, take for granted. Most of the time we look at something in one particular way; part of my goal is to get people to look at things in different ways. That can be a very powerful moment for someone. One of the reasons I like objects is that they can have all sorts of implications. So it's something we constantly shape and reshape, again and again. And yet, as much as you can say "I'll never look at it the same way again," somewhere in your brain, no matter how powerful the new insights are, you'll always retain that initial association. What I am attempting to create is not a movie you see once, but a film you see over and over, frame by frame, because it's jam-packed with details. ¶ I don't hide the objects—they're the focus. I show organic objects placed up against plastics. In *Wild Horses Redux*, the plastic football players—a toy I loved as a kid—are running across mink and through raw meat tunnels. Looking at the world this way forces me to maintain a vivid imagination. Kids do it instinctively. Think back to when you were a kid, to a time when you didn't have

any toys with you. What did you do? You picked up whatever you could find and imagined it was something else. When a kid rolls a matchbox car across the floor, he doesn't just slide it across the floor, he watches it roll across the floor at eye-level. Kids live in a rich fantasy world, that's what I'm doing.

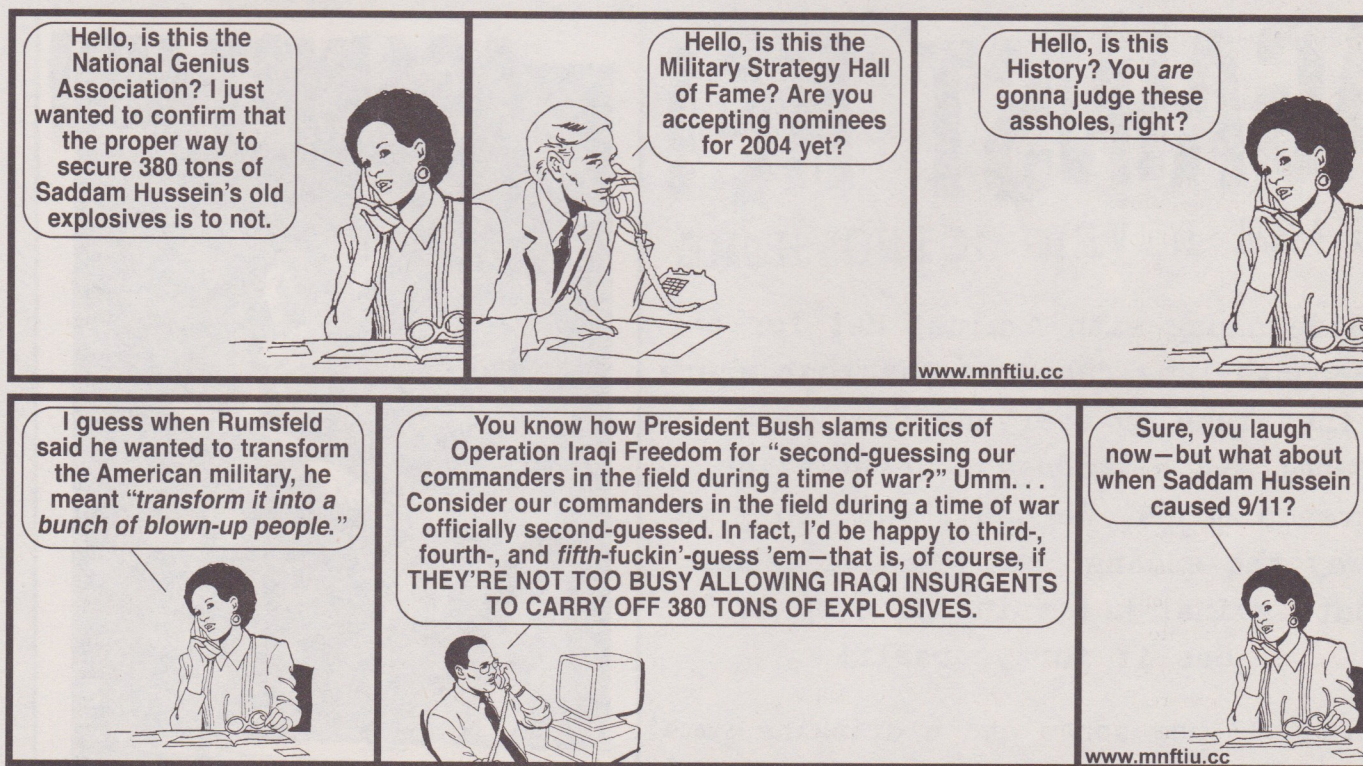
Tell me about *Kaboom!*: is it intended to be a political statement?

I first thought of doing this film when America started bombing Iraq. In general, America likes to drop bombs. I used the climate of celebration and gift giving because that's how America thinks of this: *we're doing this to help you*. That's why I use a ribbon and ornaments to represent the explosions. There's also the child-like imagery of military toys. It represents the way in which the media dilutes the reality of war. I'm not saying we're desensitized to war, I'm saying that most of us don't have any real sense of what it's like to live through it. Right now, we have no idea what's going on over there.

Are you going to continue to make more overtly political films?

It's not a huge preoccupation of mine really. I make films about the things that I'm thinking about, and right now, there's no way to avoid thinking about war and politics. We're at a very crucial time in history—who *isn't* thinking about it? —Ben Tanzer ©

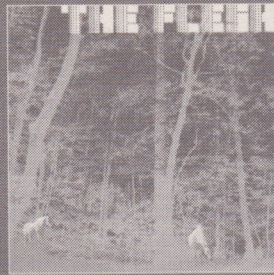
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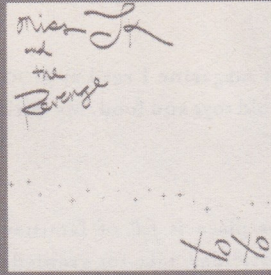
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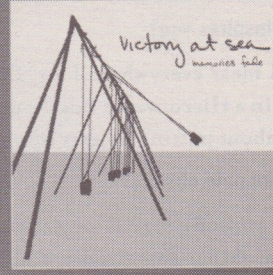
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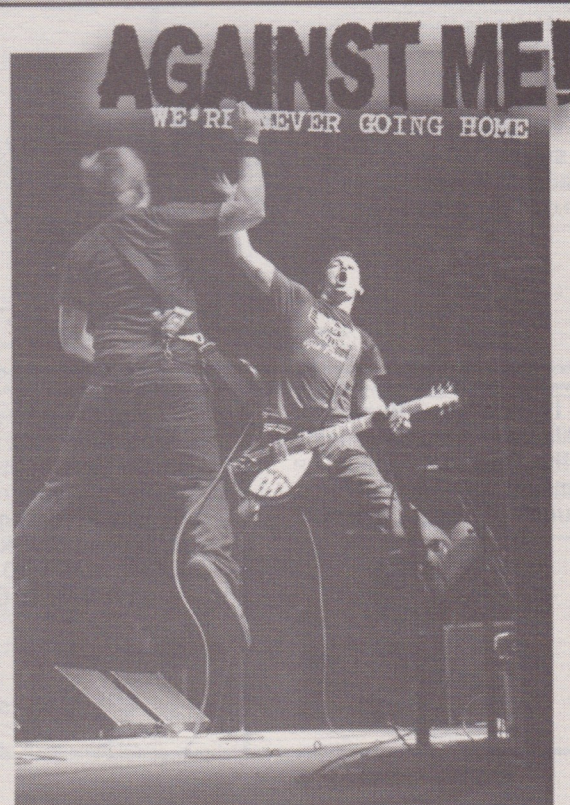
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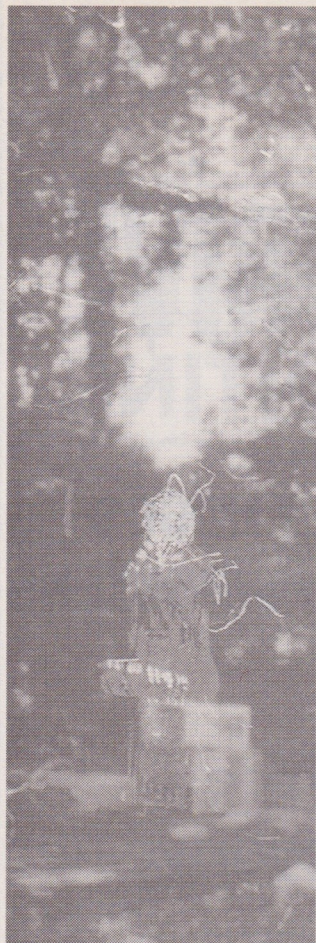
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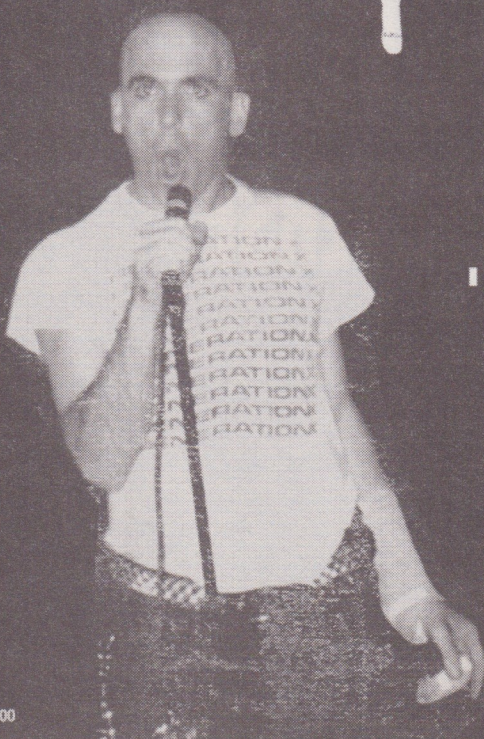
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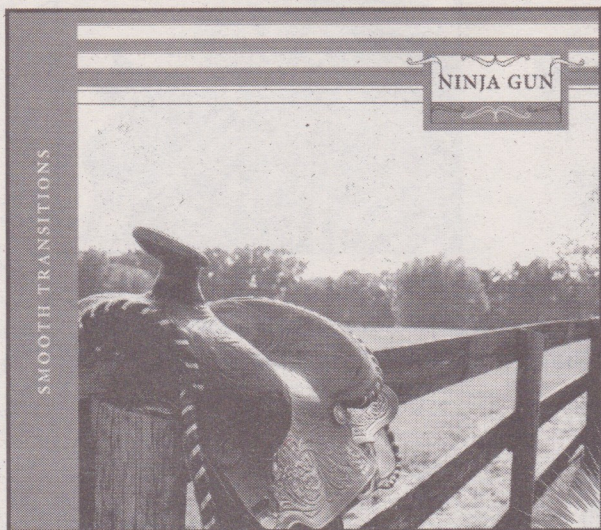
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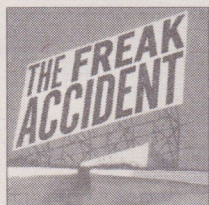
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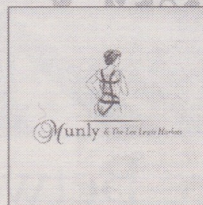
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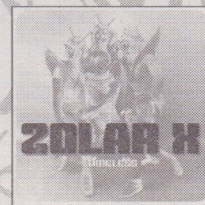
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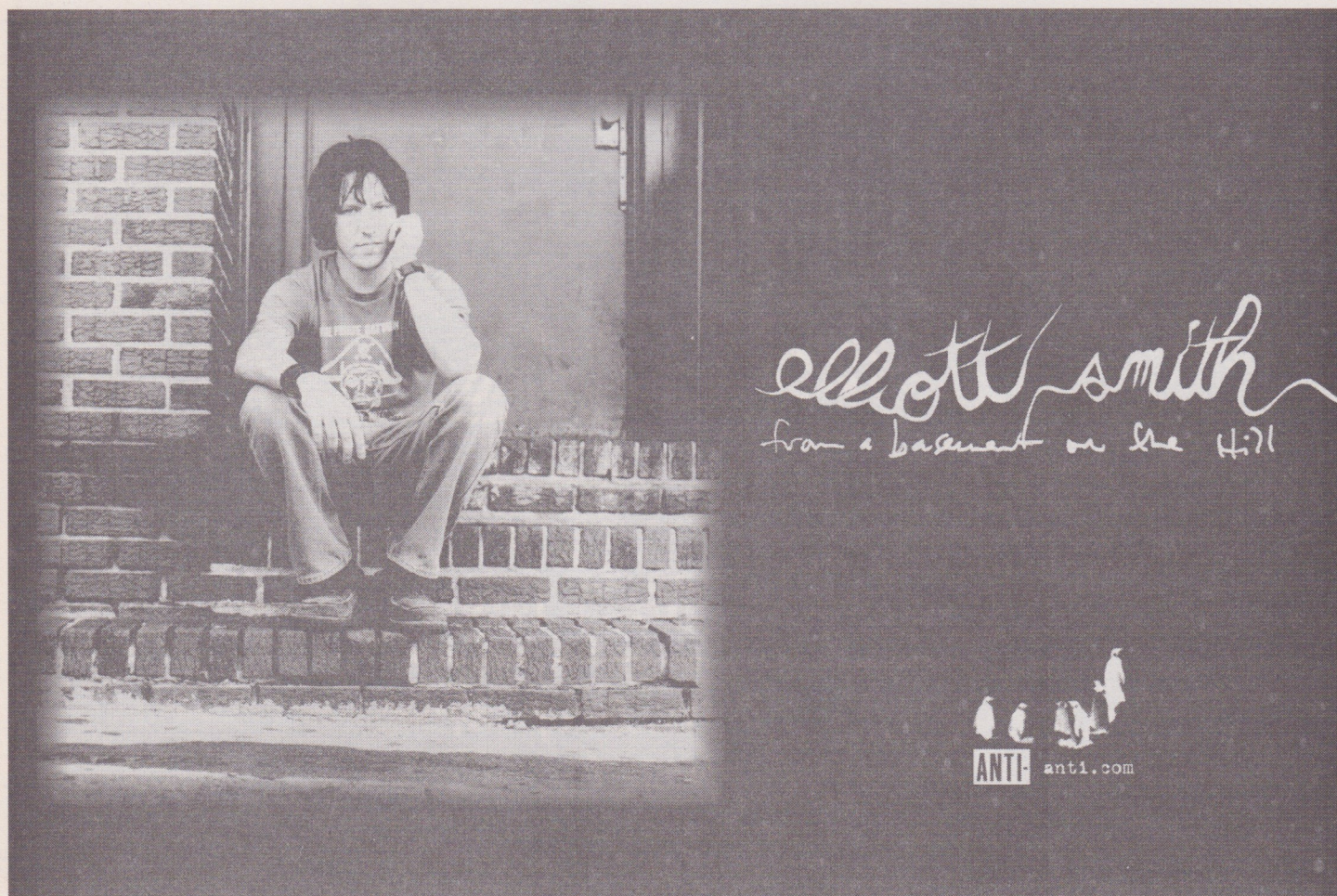


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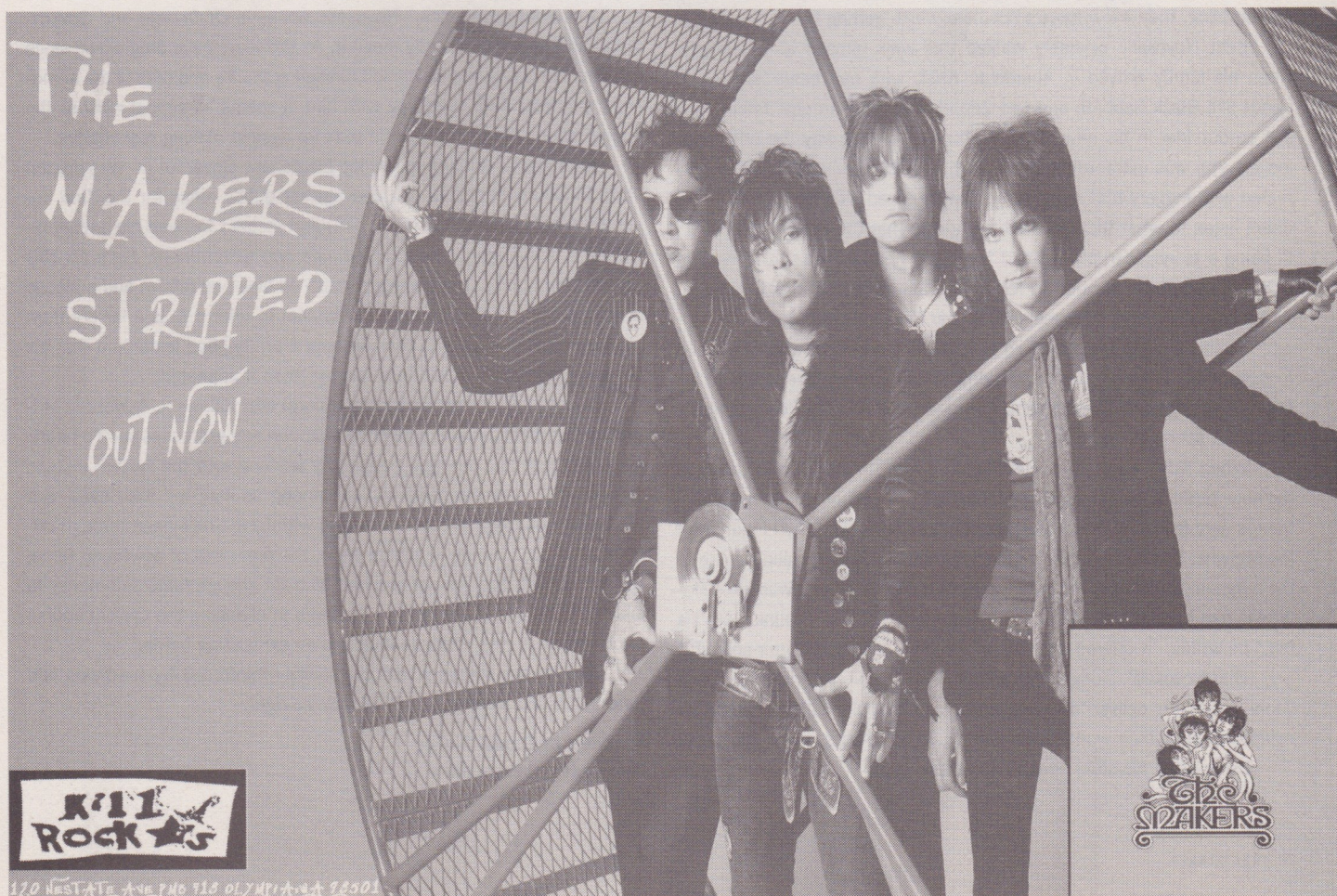
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krist novoselic

There are a number of moments reading this interview and the book excerpt that follows it that you're going to ask yourself, "Isn't this the person that threw his bass up in the air on MTV and caught it with his face?" After all, it's hard to fathom that the same guy who hobbled, dazed, off the stage in 1992 is now, 12 years later, quoting amendments to the Constitution by chapter and verse. But that's Krist Novoselic and, well, it's complicated.

Born in 1965 to Croatian parents who had immigrated to the US just two years prior, Krist and his family lived in the LA sprawl town of Gardena, California for 14 years. The rising cost of living in Southern California sent the family northward to the rural lumber-mill community of Aberdeen, Washington, where his father had found work as a machinist.

Set far enough into Washington state's beautiful Olympic Peninsula that there's no need to go there unless you're looking for it, Aberdeen is one of those towns like Flint, Michigan that hitched its economic wagon to a single horse; when that horse began to die, the town went along with it. In Aberdeen's case, it was the timber industry and the sawmills and pulp mills that process the wood from Washington's dense forests. Once a lumber boomtown with eight operational sawmills, that number has now dwindled to just one. Drive through Aberdeen today and you see teenagers walking the walk that comes from living in a go-nowhere town—slow and ambling, they know there's nowhere worth getting to.

Krist Novoselic probably walked this walk himself as a teenager when his family arrived in Aberdeen. Krist, who had been listening to bands like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin back in Gardena, found himself an outsider in his new town. He didn't look the way the other kids looked—he was extraordinarily tall with a massive underbite (later corrected with surgery that required his jaw be wired shut for a time)—and didn't listen to what they listened to. Add to that the normal difficulties of being a teenager in a dead-end town and it's not that surprising that Novoselic's parents decided to send him back to their native Croatia (at that point, still a part of Yugoslavia) a year later.

It was during the year he lived in Yugoslavia that Krist was introduced to punk rock. "A lot of music came down from London," he writes in his book *Of Grunge and Government*. "I heard punk rock and caught much of the ska scene of the time."

When Krist returned to Aberdeen, he tried to stay connected with the new music he had learned about overseas, which led him to becoming friends with fellow Aberdeen outcasts Buzz Osborne and Matt Lukin from the Melvins. The duo, Osborne especially, served as Novoselic's guide to the burgeoning underground punk scene of the early '80s. It was what Novoselic had been searching for in the years prior. "For me, punk wasn't a fad," he writes, "it offered meaning in a society that didn't offer enough."

That Novoselic, along with frontman Kurt Cobain and drummer Dave Grohl, went on to deliver "meaning in a society that didn't offer enough" for millions through their work as Nirvana would be a fitting end to his story.

Except that his story doesn't end there.

While there were bands that followed for Krist, none of them came close to the commercial success that Nirvana had, and Krist's life took its most unexpected turn. In 1995, he found himself walking the halls of Washington's legislature lobbying for support on a veto against the state's heavy-handed "Harmful to Minors" bill that restricted certain music sales to underage fans. "It was a cold plunge into our political process," Novoselic writes, and when he helped to deliver enough supporters to allow the veto to go uncontested, he realized that the water was worth swimming in.

Following that victory, Novoselic founded JAMPAC (that's Joint Artists and Music Promotions Political Action Committee, for those keeping score), a political action committee dedicated to advocating for the local music scene. "We supported candidates for office," he writes, "we identified issues that had a negative impact on our community and took them on."

One of the issues that JAMPAC found themselves embroiled in was the state's Teen Dance Ordinance, a draconian set of guidelines that made all-ages shows difficult to put on legally. Working with a coalition of youth activists, concert promoters, and others, Novoselic helped to defeat the ordinance (it was replaced by the All-Ages Dance Ordinance), and in the process—which took years—learned the true speed at which change happens.

"Succeeding in the face of the slow grind of the democratic process is a wonderful experience," Novoselic writes in *Of Grunge and Government*, and he seems to truly mean it. As the years have progressed since Nirvana, Novoselic has immersed himself in the ins and outs of the democratic process. And, in talking with him, it seems he almost *relishes* the myriad of challenges the system puts up against making real change.

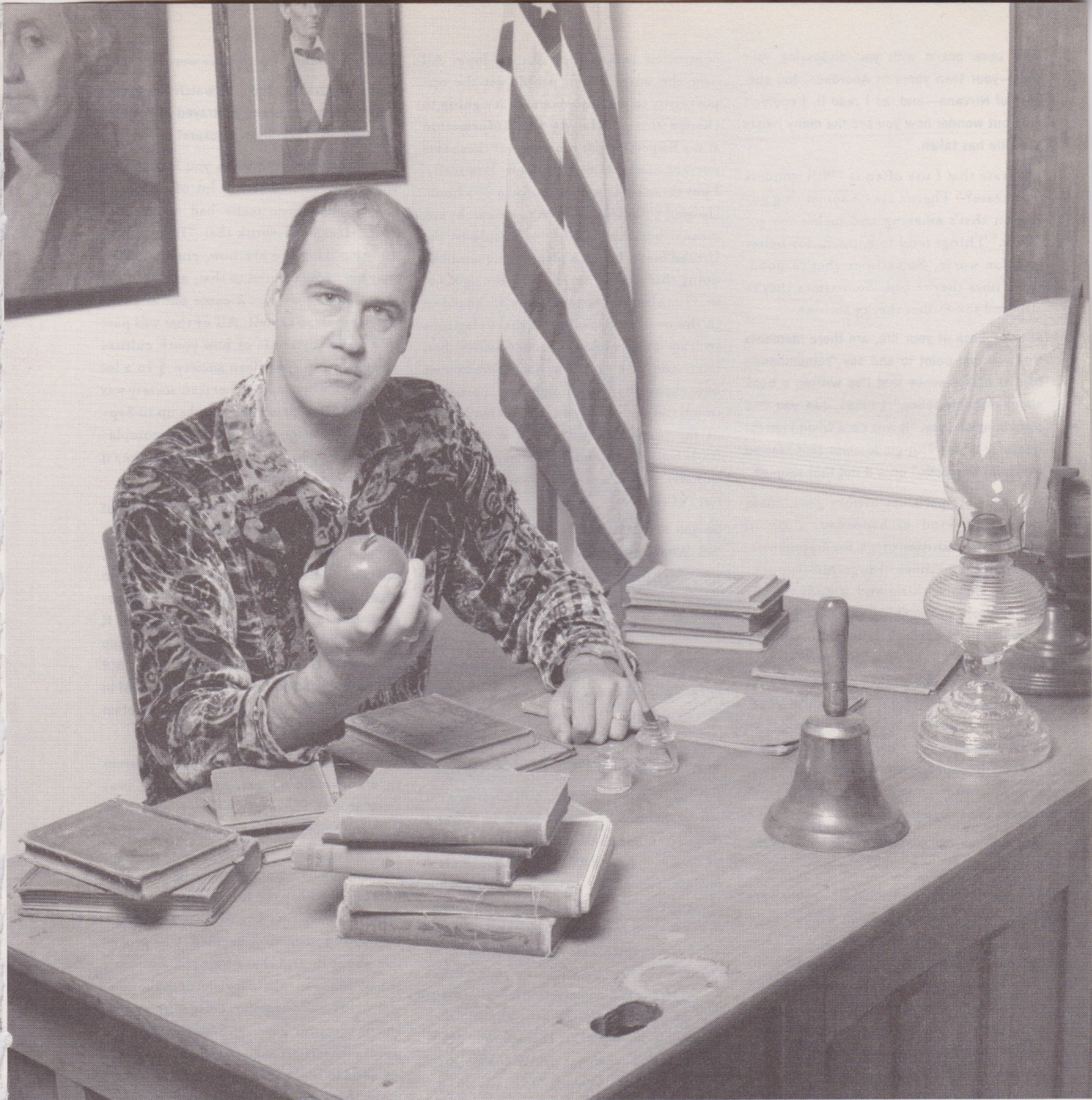
After contemplating a run for Lieutenant Governor of Washington State in 2003, Novoselic decided against public office for the time being (he hasn't ruled out a run in '08) and instead focused his energy on writing a manifesto of sorts, *Of Grunge and Government: Let's Fix this Broken Democracy*. The book, a treatise on electoral reform and a pledge of allegiance to working within the system to reform it, is a far cry from his hard-rocking days with Nirvana, and a pretty good testament that his ill-conceived bass toss did less damage than it appeared.

In our interview and the book excerpt that follows it, Novoselic embraces democratic ideals with such abandon and expresses such a heartfelt belief that real changes happen by working *with* the system instead of against it, that the more cynical among us may roll their eyes. But Novoselic has every excuse there is to withdraw—he's been through difficult times (a hard life in a hard town, the pressures of newfound fame, the suicide of a best friend) and he's also got enough fame and money to last a lifetime—and yet he truly believes in changing the cynical course of our country. He's ready to dive into an exhausting battle.

And there's the very real possibility—reinforced by the flaws laid bare in the last election—that he may be *right*.

Interview by **Daniel Sinker**

Photographs by **Ray Gordon**



"Every generation has to make a contribution to make the republic endure."

Your book opens with you discussing your past—your teen years in Aberdeen, the success of Nirvana—and, as I read it, I couldn't help but wonder how you see the many twists your life has taken.

A phrase that I use often is "Will wonders ever cease?" There's always something going on that's amazing and makes me go, "Wow." Things tend to happen, for better and for worse. Sometimes they're good, sometimes they're bad. Sometimes they're silly and sometimes they're serious.

Looking back at your life, are there moments that you can point to and say "remembering that, it makes sense that I've written a book about election policy." I mean, can you find something and say, "It was back when I ran for treasurer of my fifth-grade class that started me down this path," or is it not that simple?

As far as my personal history goes, these things just kind of happened. I try to make opportunities or go for opportunities, and sometimes things just happen. I try to do one thing and it ends up being a whole other thing instead. ¶ I had a choice this spring about what path to take—should I get really into politics and run for office, or should I write this book. I chose to write the book and remain a private citizen instead of a public figure. I've been advocating the ideas in the book for a long time—proportional representation, instant runoff voting. Back in '96 I got turned onto these ideas.

How did you come across those ideas in the first place?

I found them on the Internet. People were asking me, "Krist, how can we get more young people to vote? How can we turn out more people to the polls," and I went to look for answers for that. Thank god for search engines! I discovered Usenet groups on instant runoff elections and proportional voting and it all came out of that. It was like, *what's this?* I was looking into how to get more people involved in the election—there were so many issues and faults in the system—and I came across these amazing solutions. ¶ I've come to say that Marx was off by a suffix: Communism isn't going to save the world, it's *communication* that will. The Internet is already a problem in China, because they've

controlled information for so long. All over the world, when people get the opportunity to get information, it's going to change things. Having this information at my fingertips got me aware of these important electoral reforms and, ironically, I put them together in the form of a book. [Laughs.] ¶ [These ideas aren't *my* ideas, by any means, but the majority of people in the United States have no idea that we could be doing this stuff differently, be doing it *better*. Our electoral system is one of the oldest in the world; whenever they have elections in Iraq—and I hope it's sooner rather than later—they're *not* going to have them how we have them, they're going to have a proportional system. In Northern Ireland, part of the peace deal was that the Northern Irish legislature would be elected proportionally. And it's *going* to come here, to the land of the free.

So you first started looking into this stuff in '96. What led you there?

After Nirvana ended, I really started to get involved in conventional politics. I started a political action committee and I recognized that in order to be effective advocates, we needed to cultivate a constituency. So it became a question of how we get more voters out there.

That move seems so unexpected in a lot of ways. Why not do another band instead?

I did start another band, but it was almost out of habit. I've always been in a band since Nirvana, but when I quit Eyes Adrift in 2002, I had this realization—"Wait a minute, I don't *have* to be in a band." I'd always been in a band out of habit. I mean, it was a great habit, and I'd like to be in a band again, but not as a professional thing anymore. The band before that, Sweet 75, wasn't just a creative outlet; there was this whole professional thing about it that dragged it down for me. I always found that this political stuff was pretty compelling, and so that's why I decided to really do it.

Was that something you'd been interested in earlier too?

Yeah. I was always reading the newspaper, and Nirvana was very aware of what was going on around us. We weren't apathetic slackers, we were very conscious of current events and what was going on in the world.

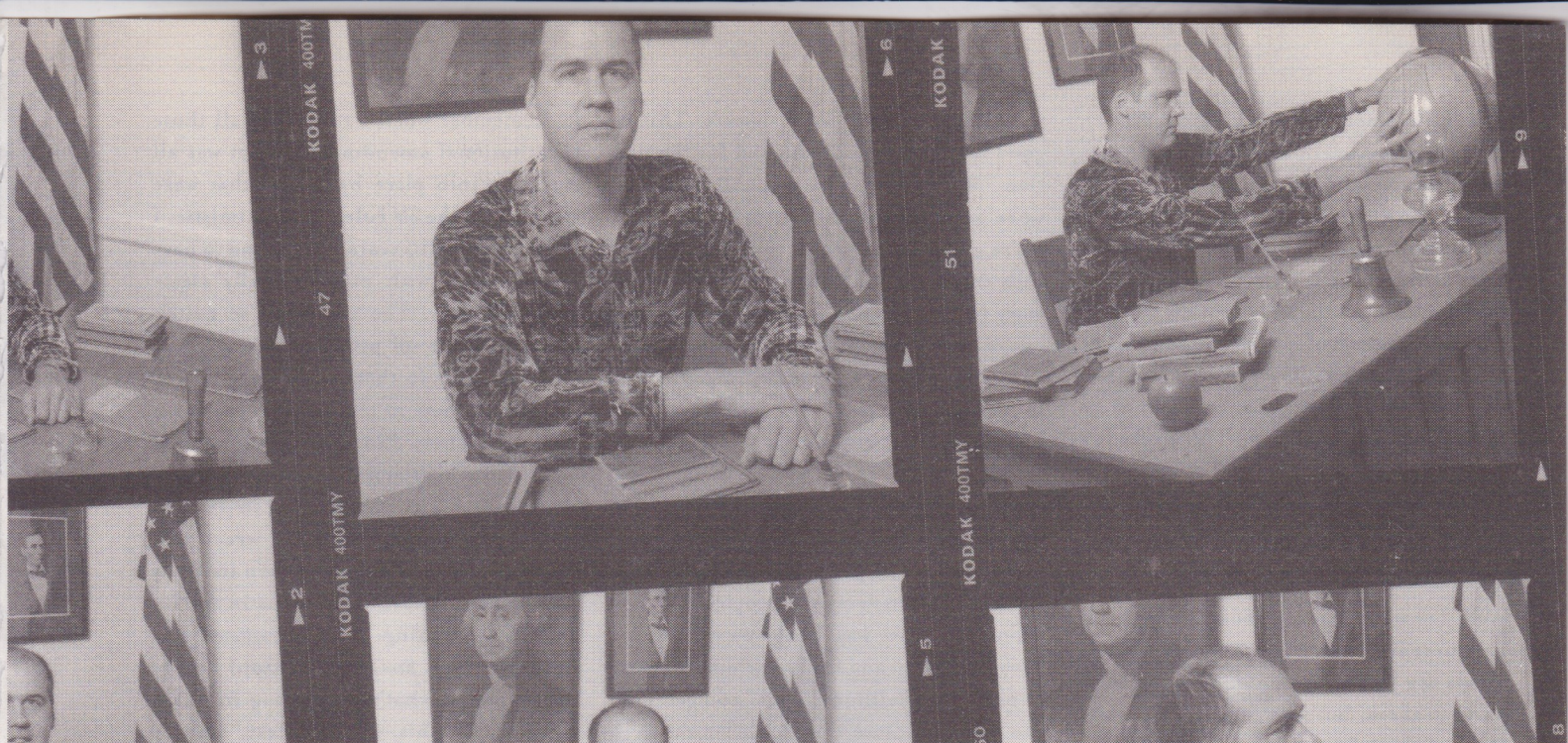
That's the kind of people we were.

Was it frustrating, then, to watch the Pacific Northwest music scene portrayed at the time as made up of apathetic slackers?

There was that, but when you looked past that, you realized that a lot of people in the Seattle music scene had college degrees. [Laughs.] I think that "Teen Spirit" and the "Here we are now, entertain us," may have contributed to that, and Douglas Coupland's *Generation X* came out at about the same time as well. All of that was part of a larger dynamic of how youth culture was viewed in American society. ¶ In a lot of ways, mainstream American society was pretty much sedated and it woke up in September of 2001, shocked out of its complacency. Now people are realizing that they'd better pay attention.

Reading your book and seeing you talk about it on tour, you discuss the elections of 2002, the year after the World Trade Center attacks, and the dismal turnout they had. You seem *genuinely* upset that turnout was just 40 percent. But to me, I wasn't that surprised. It was a mid-term election and the status quo was pretty firmly dug-in at that point. But you have this admirable hope for and belief in the system. How have you been able to retain that attitude?

It comes from working within the system in a conventional way, and coming away from it with victories! We no longer have a Teen Dance Ordinance in Washington [state] anymore, we actually have a functioning music community. Why? Because we worked within the form of democracy to do it. We were reacting to things in Washington and instead we decided to be proactive about it, and that's how you approach the system: you talk to legislatures about it, you go to public hearings and go on record, you make your case, and you make your point—this is wrong, this isn't working, we need to make this better, this is *how* we make things better. Change is never easy, there are going to be conflicts, but to see it work is amazing. ¶ The thing is, I went to Croatia in 1993 and went there again two years after that, and I saw the bomb craters and bombed-out houses and heard the stories. I met people who lost their homes and have nothing left, and it made me re-



I've always been in a band since Nirvana, but when I quit Eyes Adrift in 2002, I had this realization—"Wait a minute, I don't have to be in a band."

alize that democracy was pretty great, because it's a non-violent form for change. But there are barriers to participation, and if we can eliminate these barriers, then we can have a better democracy. ¶ Here's the punk part of it: You're challenging the status quo. You take off all their little inoculations, like how they wrap themselves in the flag and how they extol democracy. You can say, "Oh yeah, democracy's great, I believe in it"—because I do—"but if *your* democracy is so good, why is there so little participation? And if the status quo is so good, why is there so much cynicism and disconnection?" What can they say to that? All they can do is apologize for the status quo and be in denial. They can't defend it because it's *indefensible*. These low voter turnouts, it's *indefensible*. You hear a lot about the presidential election, but you almost never hear about the House of Representatives, or local elections. The terminology "mid-term

election" is so discouraging. There's no such thing as a mid-term election for the US House. ¶ This is the new wave. It challenges the status quo, and it creates a more raw democracy. It's people powered. The status quo is the establishment, and the elections now just serve them—you're trying to smash that. But not with a gun or a rock and try to overthrow them and put in a new regime, no, no, no—it's about preserving democratic institutions, but giving them an upgrade. It's just like how punk rock didn't kill rock'n'roll, it gave it new life. The alternative music of the early '90s didn't kill rock'n'roll, it gave it new life. Rock'n'roll is enduring; so is democracy.

I think it's a fitting metaphor to talk about the reemergence of rock'n'roll from the boy bands and Vanilla Ice hip-hop of the early 1990s—or even the mainstreaming of garage rock really recently—and comparing that to electoral politics. Except that with rock, you can look

at a cyclical pattern of music getting poppy and commercial and then something drags it down and makes it more raw and more real. If you look at electoral politics, you don't see that same cycle; in fact you see this progression of people becoming less and less a part of it. So how do you right the ship when it's on this very clear path? Trying to get American democracy back to what it used to be—you're talking about undoing many, many hundreds of years at this point.

Well sure, pop culture is really quick on its feet, but with democracy you have all this legalese and thousands of pages of documents and these *old* institutions. It's harder to turn around than pop music—the top of the charts is really different than 225 years of jurisprudence. But if you look at the history of the United States, it has *always* been about expanding the franchise.

The 13th amendment abolished slavery, the 14th amendment was equal protection, the 18th amendment was for direct election of Senators. The 19th amendment was for women's right to vote, which was in the early 20th century. Then we had the Voting Rights Act in the 1960s to stop the disenfranchisement of people of color. The 26th amendment let 18-year-olds vote. The Constitution is a living document—it keeps expanding the franchise. That's why it's survived for so long. I mean, I'm no constitutional scholar by any means . . .

But you can quote amendments by their number! [Laughs.]

Well, I've been reading about it, but I still have tons and tons to learn. These amendments are just a few sentences with a few parts to them, but what it does is expand the franchise for inclusion and fairness. Yeah, that ship of state is hard to turn, but we've done it before.

The way you put it, it doesn't seem like you're suggesting this massive change. Instead you're able to make it seem like it's just another addition added at a time when the flaws in the system are laid bare. I'm still not sure it's that easy, but it does make a certain amount of sense within that historical context.

Every generation has to make a contribution to make the republic endure. Now it's our turn, so what's our generation going to do to contribute to the whole idea and experiment of the United States? Let's look around us and see what's going on. We have this *big* problem on our hands now: there's this collective funk going on. People don't believe in democracy anymore. That's a crisis! And why don't they believe in democracy? Well, because there are barriers to participation, uncompetitive elections, and uncontested elections.

So how do you propose we go about turning democracy around?

The same way we took on the Teen Dance Ordinance or the "Harmful to Minors" bill. We go find some friendly legislators that are willing to introduce a bill. The bill may say that we're going to have multi-member super-districts, or we're going to have instant-runoff voting. And people are going to say, "No, this is never going to happen, this challenges the status quo." And

we're going to say, "No it doesn't. This is good for the state, this is good for the nation." We're going to have a public hearing, we're going to get co-signers on the bill. We're going to get people to testify. Hopefully the press will be there and we'll get a story in the paper. Hopefully the bill gets out of committee—if it doesn't, we'll bring it back next year. In the meantime, we'll try to get it going in some city somewhere else, or maybe some other state will get more traction on it. There will be a big train wreck somewhere where democracy really gets screwed, like in 2000, or somebody's race got messed up, or voters got excluded because of the system, and people will learn about this better way. In the meantime, we can't just go out and find somebody and say, "I need three million dollars" and get it on the ballot, because that doesn't mean it'll pass. We're better off when you find your allies, or they find you, and people come together and you build momentum and look for opportunities. Sometimes you get set back, but that's just how it is. It's a slow system. It's made that way to keep it steady.

That's where I start to get worried. I think people feel like change should happen faster than that.

Oh, but it can! Change is happening so fast anyway. With the Internet, the whole media paradigm is shifting so rapidly. Maybe this will be a quick shift. Maybe a prominent Democrat or Republican will stand up for it. Maybe Arnold Schwarzenegger will stand up and say it makes sense, if he sees the benefits of it. That'd be something.

But in a time and era where Tom Delay micro-manages the redistricting of Texas to make it even *less* representational and *less* democratic, how can you convince these people who are rigging the system in their favor that this is something they should go along with? Why would they give up what they've created—this perfect system for them and nobody else?

There's ways to do it. The states are the laboratories of democracy—the counties even more so—and so I don't see the US House swinging to a proportional system in the next year or two, but if we start getting it in counties and municipalities, it wouldn't be too long before a progressive western state like California picked up on

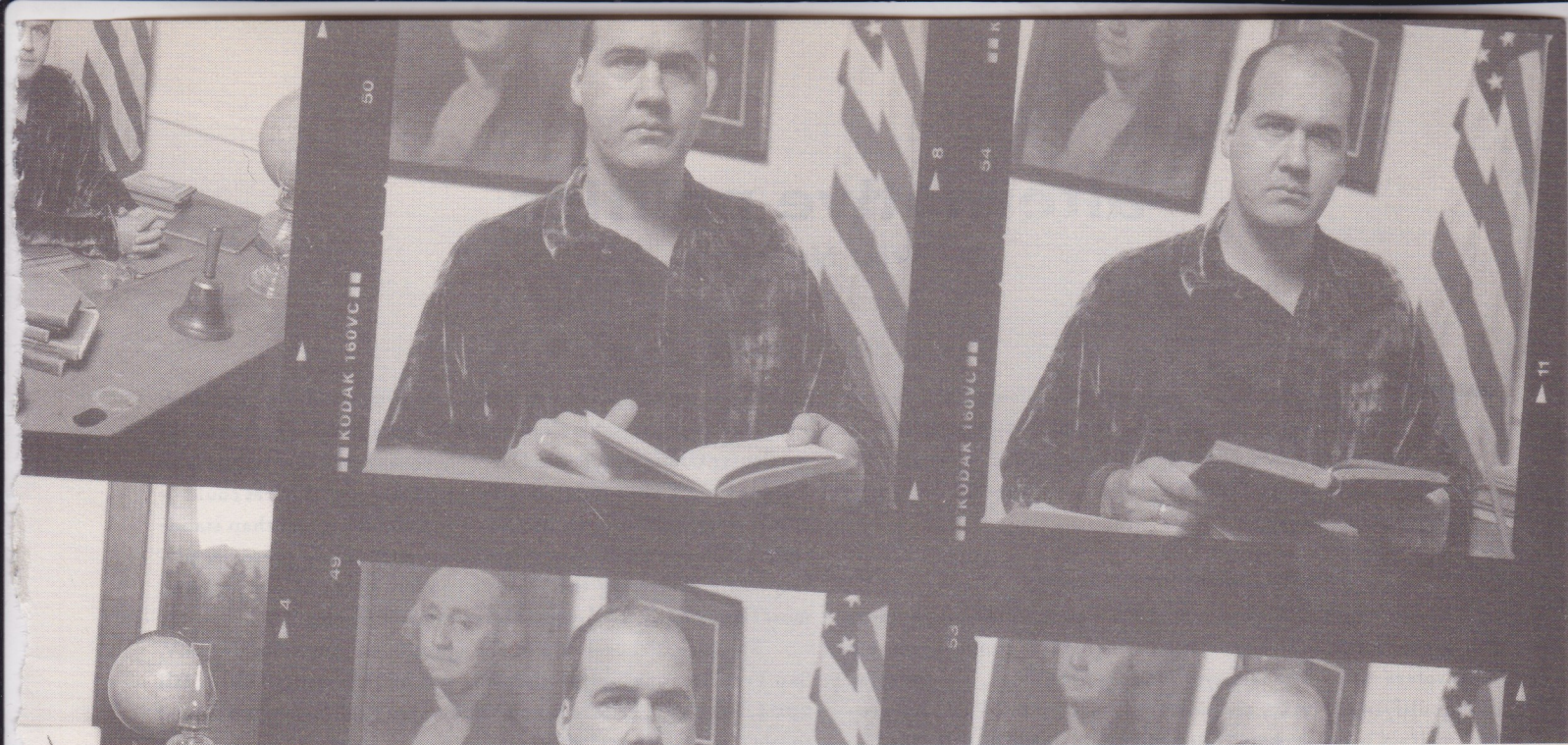
it. Remember when I rattled off all those constitutional amendments? That was all stuff put into place by people that were voted in on the *old* rules. I'm optimistic. I think in about 10 years we're going to have several states with proportionally elected legislatures. The reaction I've gotten from the book—of people thinking there are great ideas in there and asking how to implement them in their states—leaves me really optimistic. People are going to want it, then the legislators are going to *have* to agree to it. ¶ The redistricting in Texas is another example of the train wreck that the system is in. I haven't spoken in Texas yet, but I would love to go to Austin and lay out the whole thing: Are you *frustrated*? Are you *angry*? Well *here's* the solution! People could look at what's happening in Texas and say, "Oh shit, what a defeat," but it's an *opportunity*. Turn every situation into an opportunity.

How did you get so optimistic? I mean, driving through Aberdeen, Washington, and thinking about what happened with Kurt, there's not a lot of optimistic shit back in your past.

But you can also go to Aberdeen and go to somebody's house that's lived there for two or three generations and see all that history in their house. That's so cool. People have been living there for 150 years now; I know people who have lived there *forever*. This guy there has a band-saw and one of the wheels is from a Hudson car—it's the way they MacGyvered it years ago—it's really beautiful. But you can go to Aberdeen, or parts of Seattle, or parts of London or New York even, and there are parts that are not very encouraging, that's for sure. But if you look for it, you can find the beauty of it too. Aberdeen has neighborhoods with beautiful homes. Aberdeen's had a lot of bad breaks; it's a one-trick pony economy. But there are a lot of reasons to live out there on the Washington coast—that's why I live out here.

You mention in the book some moments of feeling really cynical—how have you been able to overcome them?

I can get cynical. I haven't liberated myself from cynicism through some sort of program. But it just goes again to feeling really blessed and having all these amazing op-



We have this big problem on our hands now: there's this collective funk going on. People don't believe in democracy anymore. That's a crisis!

opportunities to work with amazing people. I mean, god, I got to work with Kurt Cobain, and Dave Grohl, and Curt Kirkwood, and so many other people. What a blessing! Why would I get cynical about that? I'm lucky! But I've also had the misfortune of being in some really horrible situations, and that's when you recognize what's important in your life. It's like people who are told they have cancer, they quit smoking—they don't need the patch, the shock of reality sometimes just comes and you see that and you realize that you're not going to live forever. I'm only 39 years old—I'm young.

It's an old cliché that rock'n'roll can change the world. But I wonder if your actions contradict that. I mean, you've left rock'n'roll to save the world—or at least a part of it. Do you feel like your actions are saying that?

No, I think I'm saying that it's what works best for *me*; it's what I'm compelled to do.

When I decided to do more political things and write the book, I was doing things by myself and for myself and I'm really happy with it. But it's what works for *me*. There are people that are great songwriters and great musicians, and they should stick with it. I think that I'm a really great bass player, and I could be a good musician if I wanted to be, but I don't feel compelled to do it in a professional way anymore. It was too much work! I made a great record with Curt and Bud [Novoselic's bandmates in *Eyes Adrift*]. I think it was one of the best records of 2002, in my less-than-humble opinion [laughs], but it was so much work to do that. It was like paddling upstream. At the same time that I was doing that, I had all these different opportunities for political work showing up on my doorstep every day. And all the indicators were saying don't be in the music industry anymore. It just wasn't working.

Your life has taken some unexpected turns, so this may not even be a fair question, but where do you see yourself five years from now?

Five years from now? I just hope I'm more relaxed, more mature, and still being optimistic and working with people for the common good. That's it, you know? That's all you can really ask for. Whatever opportunities come up will reveal themselves.

Do you see yourself running for office? I know you did consider a run for Lieutenant Governor at some point, but is that still in the cards?

Yeah, there's going to be an open seat in 2008, is what I'm told. That might be a good opportunity, but maybe it won't be. But oh god, tomorrow isn't guaranteed at all. There's no guarantee for tomorrow, so in the meantime you can't get hung up on stuff. You've got to be in the moment, because you can sure get hung up on a lot of crap if you're not careful. ©

alternative politics

by Krist Novoselic

This being the USA, there are always opportunities to move things forward. I am actually very enthusiastic about American democracy and the possibilities for real change. It's just a matter of getting the word out. Let's start to think about tangible solutions to fix our broken elections. Innovative reforms are in fact taking root in our nation.

IRV: Instant Runoff Voting

Instant Runoff Voting, or IRV, can accommodate more choices in elections and promises to be popular simply because it saves voters' time—and taxpayers' money—by folding the function of a qualifying primary election into the general. IRV also protects privacy because there is no primary to declare affiliation.

With IRV, you vote for candidates in order of preference. In a field of four candidates, for example, you mark the ballot with a first choice, second choice, third choice, and fourth choice. As with any ballot, you can also choose not to vote for a candidate or candidates. If a candidate wins the majority of first choices, the election is over. If not, the instant runoff goes into effect and determines the majority winner. In a nutshell, the candidate wins who has the best balance of strong first-choice support and strong support as a second and possibly third choice. IRV remedies the problem of spoiler candidates and wasted votes. A constituent is free to vote his or her conscience and not worry about pre-election polls. She could vote for a third party, independent, or outspoken major-party candidate as a first choice, and put a more cautious major-party candidate as second. People wouldn't feel compelled to picket Ralph Nader appearances anymore.

IRV not only accommodates electoral coalitions, it actually encourages them. Third parties could come in from the wilderness. People would be less cynical because they'd feel like their vote counted. Candidates would be more careful about engaging in negative advertising because they would want second-choice support too. Moderate candidates would tread lightly on the politically fruitful territory of the centrist voter. If IRV does benefit any kind of candidate, moderates tend to collect second- and third-choice support from the ideological margins of their respective constituencies. Some people ask if this method violates the principle of "one person, one vote," but it doesn't—every voter has one vote in each round of counting, just as in our current system. Primary elections, in fact, are already a process of winnowing candidates. I've voted for a different candidate in the primary than in the general election; that was effectively two votes, or choices, in the same election. IRV also makes campaigns less expensive because a candidate doesn't have to run two campaigns.

IRV folds a qualifying primary into the general election. It eliminates the lowest vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation,

and distributes those choices until a majority winner is tabulated. Like other winner-take-all elections, it has a drawback. Due to the particular tabulation method, in a three-way race that requires an instant runoff, the candidate with the most second choices could be eliminated. Even so, IRV has more benefits for voters than stand-alone, exclusive primaries. It saves time and money, preserves privacy while protecting the free-association rights of parties. And most importantly, IRV gives voters more *real* choices.

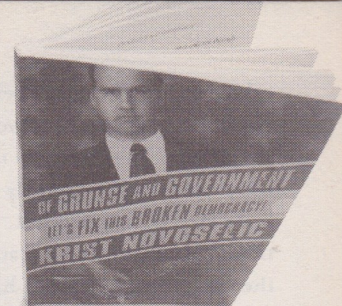
The city of London and the country of Australia use IRV. San Francisco municipal elections will be held using IRV in fall 2004. Berkeley, California and Vancouver, Washington have voted to start using it too. Utah Republicans now choose their statewide and congressional nominees with IRV. Some two-dozen colleges have adopted IRV, including Rice, Duke, the University of Massachusetts, and the University of Minnesota. The student vote to adopt it at Minnesota was a 76 percent yes majority.

People can be cautious about change, regardless of how much sense it makes. But once people become comfortable with IRV on a local level, it'll be an easy consideration for state and federal races, particularly when there's widespread perception in a given state that a key race was only won because of a spoiler. Instant Runoff Voting is an innovation that will reduce the barriers inhibiting participation, and could play a major role in reigniting democracy in the US.

Full Representation

Other nations enjoy voter turnout of up to 90 percent. We can take their best elements and build an electoral system that suits our own needs and values. Most modern democracies use full representation, also called proportional representation. Full representation and the lively, engaging, community-building politics it produces helps explain the high voter turnout in other countries. Some will say cultural differences between the US and the rest of the world are why we have such low voter turnout. But that's like saying Americans are just a slovenly bunch of overweight couch potatoes too lazy to get down to the polls.

Full representation could remedy the discouraging situations we voters endure. As a reform, it goes beyond hanging chads or touch-screen machines. It is a fundamental reform that is modern and smart. Full representation is just like its title suggests. If a political party—or a cohesive group of independent-minded voters—earns 50 percent of the votes, it should earn 50 percent of the seats. If it earns 10 percent of votes, it should earn 10 percent of seats. Instead of single-member, winner-take-all districts, representation is allocated proportional to votes. Multi-member delegations are elected to their legislatures from geographically larger super-districts.



Many people make the mistake of confusing the parliamentary systems that some countries in Europe use with full representation. In fact, this is the most common misperception I hear in discussions about electoral reform. I am not advocating we change our system of government. I only propose changing our system of elections. My plan is modest. I am advocating that we start by changing elections for our respective state houses only. If we're going to have both a state Senate and a state House, let's not elect them exactly the same way. Let's have one represent the areas of a state through small districts, and the other the people of the state through full-representation super-districts. Once it gains hold, full representation could usher in a new paradigm of vitality to stir up the epicenter of our political stasis—namely our capital, Washington, DC.

Every state has its own issues and circumstances that can be accommodated with full representation. We citizens can build a modern democracy as we see fit. If we make sure that it is rooted in fairness, promotes inclusion, and is driven by the force of competition, we will be well on our way to a proportional system.

Here is my suggestion for a full-representation plan tailored for the state of Washington. Instead of 49 State House districts, I propose we create nine larger multi-member districts. Current US House of Representatives boundary lines could make up the super-districts. Each district would elect 11 members to the State House. That would only increase the House membership from 98 to 99. Political parties, or other groups of independent-minded voters, would run up to 11 candidates each on open party list ballots, with those candidates reflecting the full range of views and interests within that party. Voters would choose their favorite candidate from their favorite party. If a party wins 60 percent, their top six vote-getters go to the legislature. Even if a party receives only 10 percent, one candidate will be elected.

With super-districts, 90 percent of the voters will feel that they have representation. This will obviously make voting much more meaningful to millions of people. There will be no "safe seats" to give away to the incumbent parties. EVERY seat in a full-representation State House will be competitive. Political parties will stand in the marketplace of ideas *earning* their seats. super-districts make most voters winners, and could be the start of restoring confidence in our democracy. Every Republican and Democratic voter will have representation in their State House. They will hold the real value of being an actual constituent. Democracy will not be over on the first Wednesday of November—that's when too many voters fall into the moribund "loser" columns of election returns. No longer will voters have to hold their breath until the next round of decennial redistricting, hoping they fall on the

winning side of a geographic lottery. A full-representation State House will finally carry the moniker of the "People's House" authentically. Inclusion will be the rule that invites participation. We can make sure major parties are truly accountable by opening up our elections to third parties, and voters will finally have real choices. Competition for voters will create the incentive for parties to cultivate new constituencies. Wasted and surplus votes will be minimized. "Wasted voters" will be led back in from the wilderness with the promise and dignity of having actual representation in the People's House.

Party Lists

A party list is a roster of candidates published by each political organization. A good party list should reflect a diverse array of citizens, and a team of 11 party members could canvass a whole district in a system of super-districts. They could attend events all together, in smaller groups, or individually. At the same time, they'd not only be competing against rival parties, they would work to be the top vote-getters of their respective party. I believe that's a healthy incentive for candidates to be the best campaigners they can.

Of course, money makes an impact all its own. A self-financed candidate has an advantage regardless of what electoral system is used. (It's been said that in politics, money is like water—it finds a way.) But given a wide range of choices, most voters will support someone based on really believing they are the best candidate for them—and that belief is hard to buy when voters have real choices with a range of views. Year after year, the lack of participation of our youth in elections is lamented. But a party could have candidates that look, talk, and care about issues affecting young people by actually *having* young people on their list. Imagine the potential for young people to reconnect with our democracy!

Getting elected is no simple matter, and seats are not just up for grabs with super-districts. A frequent criticism of full-representational systems is the possible fragmentation of the governing body. This is a reasonable concern. A tenuous fragmentation could be an issue if we were considering electing all the State House members at-large. With 98 members, that would mean the threshold for representation would be around one percent. Indeed, so-called fringe groups and people with irrational perspectives could more easily get elected. (They do under the current system anyway . . .)

Germany remedied electoral fragmentation years ago by imposing a five percent threshold—for the sake of political stability, a party or candidate must cross the five percent line to win. With super-districts, a party or candidate would need almost twice that threshold, or nine percent of the vote, to merit election. It's typi-

cal for around 300,000 voters to turn out in a US congressional election. That means it would take about 27,000 votes to win a single seat. Twenty-seven thousand is about the same number of votes candidates currently need to gain a seat in the Washington State House. So, in effect, the bar is neither lowered nor raised—though dialogue and debate in the legislature would now include the viewpoints of a much higher percentage of the population.

Third parties will need to appeal to the majority mainstream sensibilities of Washington voters to win. Fringe candidates will likely stay on the sidelines, unable to cross the high threshold built into super-districts. Ultimately, if a party offers an unappealing message with weak candidates, they will not win anything—but that's their problem. Increased competition will drive Get Out The Vote (GOTV) efforts. Surplus votes will never exceed nine percent. If a political organization conducting a GOTV drive finds its efforts gaining by seven percent, they'll be compelled to push harder for the two percent of voters to cross the threshold and win another seat for their cause. That means more work, more engagement with folks, and more vitality for our elections. Competing parties would work the whole district. Urban and rural issues would be spoken to in the race for more seats.

There will not only be competition for voters in this scenario, the real opportunities created could drive a dynamic inside of the respective parties. Intra-party competition could start at a privately funded and organized caucus. The 2004 Washington Democratic presidential caucuses were fueled by the force of competition, since these caucuses are not subject to a winner-take-all system. Precinct meetings bulged to overflow capacity with citizens who wanted a say in who got to run for president. The Republican caucuses, on the other hand, were a mere matter of procedure—as their candidate, George W Bush, was an incumbent—with a handful of party members in each precinct going through the motions of nominating their candidate. (This is another example of competition driving turnout.)

I attended my precinct caucus as a Democrat who wanted a voice in nominating our candidate for president. It was a small rural meeting, but nonetheless a model of political discourse. We debated the merits of our candidates in a respectful, straightforward manner. We were charting the course of where we thought our nation should go by utilizing the democratic devices afforded us. Anybody who declared an affiliation to our party was included in the discussion. We were engaging in civic affairs while protecting the free-association rights of our organization. After the back and forth, we voted on our nominee. Bad feelings were negated because we were using a proportional system that represented people well and, as with IRV, gave people a chance to support their second choice if their first choice lacked favor.

Just imagine if the Democrats had used our antiquated winner-take-all system for their nominating process. With the old system, the Democratic primary would have been over by the time our state's turn came around. Our caucus would have had a meager turnout similar to the Republicans. John Kerry would have taken all the surplus votes in the earlier contests for himself, crossing the threshold for nomination. The other candidates would not have won *any* delegates, regardless of respectable

second- or third-place showings. The positive attributes of the proportional, or full-representation system were quite evident. While Kerry was the ultimate winner, all of the other challengers will have delegates at their respective state and national conventions. The Democrats will benefit from the proportional system because of its inherent inclusiveness. Party unity is served because contention is minimized. People feel better about the process because there is more equity. With super-districts, a party caucus could take place every two years, as party members would assemble for the task of nominating the 11 members for the open-list ballot. Unlike with partisan primaries, public monies would not be used for these private functions.

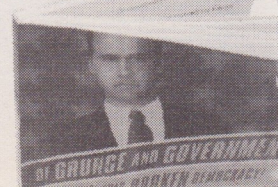
Whatever means a party uses to come up with its list is the private affair of the organization. A group of, say, five independent-minded people could join together to run and hope for just one name to get elected. They'd need to come up with a name and comply with ballot access rules. If they had good exposure, a comprehensive message, and drew enough votes, they could send their top vote-getter to the legislature. There is an incentive for all members on the list to work hard; the winning candidate could take a couple of their list-mates to work as paid staff in the House.

A Higher Body

People criticize parliamentary democracies as being unstable. In a parliamentary system, the majority coalition is the ruling government. If it fractures, the coalition loses its majority and the government collapses. Our bicameral system, with the added check of an executive officer (the governor), provides greater stability. super-districts would not alter the election of state senators. I propose my state's 49 senatorial districts remain unchanged. Currently, the only major difference between the State House and Senate is the number of members and length of their terms. State senators serve four-year terms and only half the Senate is up for election in a given year, ensuring continuity in government; thus the Senate is referred to as a "higher body." This provides a counterweight to the two-year terms for members of the full-representation People's House. The idea for these shorter terms is to have a responsive government. Again, why have two chambers that are elected the same way?

The notion of minority rule is the biggest bogeyman conjured by people who misunderstand proportional systems. It can be said that our current system already promotes minority rule. A single chair of a legislative committee can simply refuse to hear a bill before them—that's how much power a chairmanship wields. Another example is our discouragingly low election turnouts. If turnout in 2002 was 40 percent, that means the ruling party in the US House was elected by around 20 percent of the voters! I won't mention the people who don't even bother to register, let alone vote. And a good many of the people who did vote didn't actually elect a candidate; they fell in the loser column on election night. How's that for minority rule? A well-designed proportional system will minimize the problem—and that's the point. For we can make the best electoral process however we want. ©

Excerpted from *Of Grunge and Government: Let's Fix This Broken Democracy* by Krist Novoselic. Published by RVD/Akashic, 2004.



"Joe Meno writes with the energy, honesty, and emotional impact of the best punk rock. From the opening sentence to the very last word, *Hairstyles of the Damned* held me in his grip."

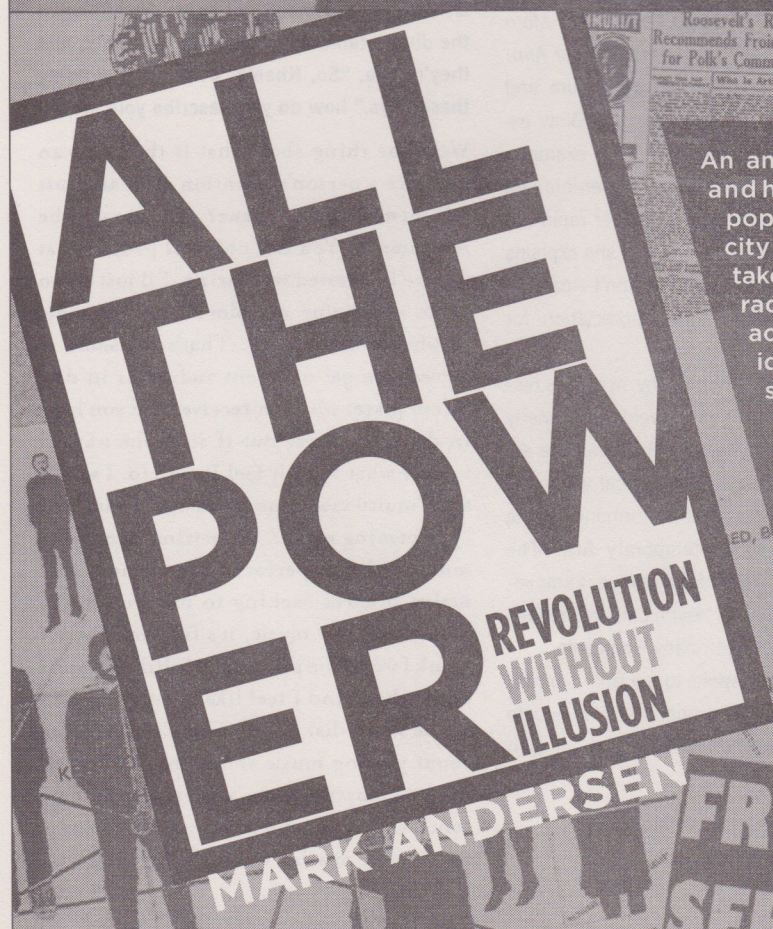
—Jim DeRogatis, pop music critic, *Chicago Sun-Times*

"This book is hell-a good. Joe Meno is the new insightful voice for the punk community. He manages to sink into the teenage-outcast experience, challenge segregation, and provide step-by-step instructions on dyeing hair pink in this realistic account of finding your identity. After reading *Hairstyles of the Damned*, I'm glad I'm not in high school anymore."

—Amy Schroeder, *Venus* magazine

hairstyles of the damned

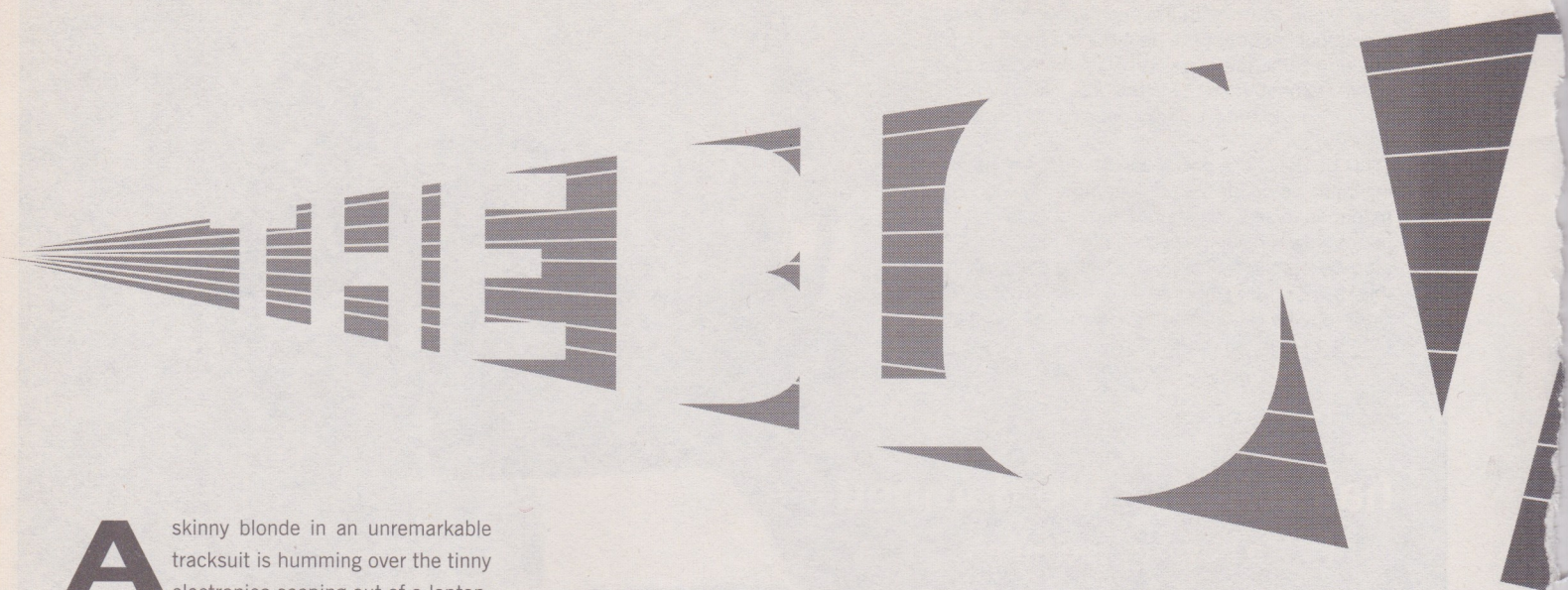
a novel by joe meno



An ambitious, accessible mix of history, autobiography, and how-to-manual, this "anti-manifesto" challenges popular concepts of radical activism. Long-time inner-city organizer and punk rabble-rouser Mark Andersen takes aim at the illusions that tend to keep North American radicals self-satisfied but ineffective. A whirlwind tour across decades—through punk and student activism, identity and lifestyle politics, animal rights, armed struggle, patriotism, globalization, and beyond—this book seeks a radicalism that is both rigorously self-critical and genuinely populist. Leaping from agrarian socialist experiments of the early twentieth century to embattled 1960s streets to the fiercely independent punk underground of the 1980s and 1990s to the present-day global-justice movement, *All the Power* suggests how the seemingly most idealistic of enterprises—revolution—might be practically accomplished.



BOTH BOOKS OUT NOW ON PUNK PLANET BOOKS WWW.PUNKPLANETBOOKS.COM



A skinny blonde in an unremarkable tracksuit is humming over the tinny electronica seeping out of a laptop. Her humming evolves into a song—or at least the idea of a song—but just when you think it is going to fully develop, it devolves again because she can't remember the words or make up new ones fast enough to keep the beat. It's all wonky, but for some reason the whole room is jumping up and down anyway, doing that dumb raise-the-roof dance move to an unrecognizable version of "Every Little Thing She Does," or an incomplete song about a boy that never called back. This is Khaela Maricich, and with the crowd reacting to her performance-art-cum-pop-antics like they're a gaggle of puppies at the beach, this must be Olympia, Washington.

Yes, Olympia: Bikini Kill, Stella Marris, Nomy Lamm, Riot Girl and Evergreen State College. Maricich owes a lot to the Riot Girls. "They made it more possible for me to feel like it was normal to be in a band or speak my mind or wear a ripped up slip as a dress and not give a shit," she says. An articulate, enthusiastic, former high-school square luckily born into K Records royalty (a cousin was in Beat Happening), Maricich doesn't wear ripped up slips; she prefers trim tennis shoes and neat wool sweaters and not giving a shit.

Maricich's band the Blow—a solo project into which she pulls various collaborators—may sound more *Free to be You and Me* than "Rebel Girl," an association mirrored in descriptions of their work. All the artistic and musical genres that get applied to the Blow are as uncomfortable and ill-fitting as any ripped-up slip:

pop-performance art-punk-electronica-musical theater? It's a little hard to picture.

What ties it all together is Khaela Maricich's ability to process things deeply. She tears them open as if she's splitting a rough-skinned fruit with you. Her albums (*The Bonus Album*, *Concussive Caress*, or *Casey Caught Her Mom Singing Along with the Vacuum*, and *Poor Aim: Love Songs*) are laptop-tinged pop, pure and simple, but they're only a part of the Blow experience. Her recordings don't, for example, convey Maricich's pseudo-shy, hyper-intimate stage presence. They don't reveal her rapid-fire improvisational narratives in which she explains her emotional state. And they don't—*can't*—demonstrate Maricich's total appreciation for other people.

Lured away from Olympia by an artist's residency at übercool ad agency, Weiden+Kennedy in Portland, Oregon, Maricich has used the experience to further push her musical work into performance art. Her recent performance at the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, "The Touch Me Feeling," tells of the unique, karaoke- and dance-based mental health care techniques offered by fake Swiss company Remôsch.

Khaela Maricich spoke to me from her new hometown, in a conversation that revealed to me just how much she's willing to share with her audience.

Interview by **Anne Elizabeth Moore**

Photographs by **Daniel Peterhans**

The Blow cross a bunch of lines between art and performance and music. Where do you sit with that? I mean, when you're sitting at the dinner table with some grandparents, and they're like, "So, Khaela, what are you doing these days," how do you describe your work?

Well, the thing about that is that you can measure a person's attention span and just tell them whatever answer they can get the most out of. You can only tell people what they're interested in hearing. I'll just try to make it enticing or colorful or listenable to whoever's listening. That's the same as shows, you get different audiences in different places who can receive what you have in different ways. But if someone wanted to hear what I really feel I'm up to, I would say, "multi-media performance artist," or "performing artist." It's getting to mix the music with the performance element that makes it extra exciting to me. For me to be making pop music, it's fun, but I don't think I would be personally fulfilled by just doing that. And I feel like I've approached music from that angle. There's something about playing music shows that's so much more democratic than art festivals and art centers. You'll get a wider swath of audience—well, maybe not so much a wider



swath, but it's cheaper and there are people who will go to see music shows that won't wander into an art center. It's a little bit more populist, I think. I love music shows for that reason. If I had my druthers, I'd get to perform in all kinds of places. I'd perform in, like, schools, and I'd do a performance that could go to a county fair. But, yeah, "performance artist" doesn't sound so good to a lot of people. It sounds like Cheez-Whiz on your body and bright colors and weird movements.

You approach performances by making yourself very open, very vulnerable. Do you ever feel like you share too much?

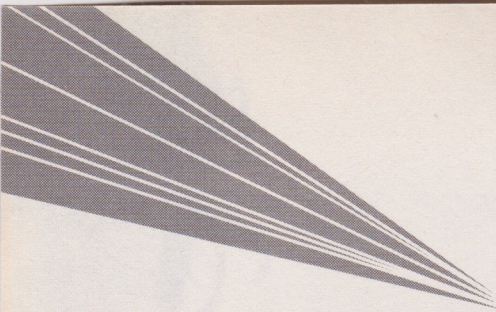
I feel like I have this basic openness and faith and trust in everybody. I mean, I think I can tell when somebody is too hurt or scared to be trustworthy—when they are so much of a mess that they can become dangerous—but I feel like I can still

see that there is earnest goodness inside them. I have the philosophy that there is so much that doesn't get shared. Secrets are such a burden for so many people—myself, included—that it's a lot better to err on the side of exposure. I think that there are a lot of things that you can only figure out by making a mess, and by bumping up against the boundaries of what's OK—and even crossing them now and then. What's the worst thing that can happen? People will laugh? People will feel embarrassed for you? I feel like I've walked through that territory—making up songs on the spot; trying to express really far-out ideas; telling a roomful of strangers my darkest fears—and nothing really all that bad ever came from it.

It's amazing that you're able to do that. As an audience member, it feels like a gift. There's a sense that you care very deeply about your audience. But

at the same time, I imagine you would get a lot of crazy fans, which could get draining.

I really feel like there've been lots of situations where my friends and I have been doing something that's particularly open, like one time we were standing on the street singing a song and this guy came up—he was this guy who stayed on the street a lot—and he wanted to be part of it. I feel like it's such a rare experience to see people being open with each other, and so people who are really hurting for some kind of feeling of light, or the feeling of that happening together, are totally attracted to it immediately. I can't blame them for that. It's a feeling of life and togetherness and light. As a kid, everything seemed so dull and boring to me all the time and whenever I found any art or excitement or happening, I was like, "Oh wow! This is really something neat!"



There's something about playing music shows that's so much more democratic than art festivals and art centers.

There's a tender space there, and I can see why people get attracted to it. I never feel that threatened by people coming into those spaces because I realize that it's an exception to find that kind of liquid experience going on. They want to get a drink of it too and they don't know how to deal with it. They don't know the etiquette, so I just try to honor the person and keep my experience going for myself and not let all the attention get sucked up by that person's need, even though they usually have a huge need. That person probably has no friends, no family, no self-respect, no confidence, no house even—nothing. They have nothing. People who've become garbage, who are treated like garbage. I don't know how to deal with that, so I try not to overreact too much. I just try to divert it and let them be a part of it in whatever small way they can.

When I saw you play in Olympia, an older black man who appeared to have had some rough financial times walked right up to you to try to get your attention. You told him, "You know what? I'm playing a show right now." I knew cognitively that someone had wandered in off the street that didn't always hang out with the Olympia punk scene, but your reaction was so calm that I assumed you knew each other.

Well I didn't want to make him feel like a shitty shit. I try to have that be the same approach to feminism. I don't have to be like, "I'm a girl And I can do what I want!" If you're yelling about it, then you must

not totally believe it yourself. ¶ My mom is a *really* strong woman, and she gave me a lot of influence that way. She wouldn't call herself a feminist. She didn't read Gloria Steinem, or whatever, but she did whatever the hell she wanted to do. She was in the Marines. She went to law school. She wears lots of diamonds, and she doesn't leave the house without makeup. The thought of a man telling her what to do is absurd. She's a lot to deal with, that's for sure. But I feel like she gave me this innate sense that, "Of course you do whatever you want to do. Why wouldn't you?"

That's so interesting. I feel like that's an attitude that has only been possible in my lifetime.

Like how?

I feel like 15 years ago it wasn't possible for a woman to assume an equal responsibility and capacity for women in the world as men. Women were spending all this time yelling about stuff and trying to carve out space. Both '70s feminism and Riot Girl were so much about yelling and carving out space. I definitely went through a phase where I did my share of yelling about stuff, too.

It's hard to carve out space. I think that if I didn't have the kind of mom that I have, I would feel that—as a woman—I would need to do that. She just takes up space. I mean, my dad does not have the power in our family. He would admit it. ¶ For me, I see it through a different lens. When I look at what life was like for women in previous generations, I feel like a couple generations later I have the benefit of not having to be so hard. I can just *assume* my own strength and embody it. It's a struggle, but I can work on embodying my strength and be really receptive and com-

passionate. ¶ There's definitely a model for women who are super-intense and involved in the business world and have a lot of power. You see that in movies—women who have the big shoulder pads—they may not be yelling about feminism, but they are strong women, and they always end up being a little bit hard. I feel like my mom was a little bit in that vein.

And you feel like you're able to avoid that?

I can definitely be super-hard, but I feel like I've gotten to be more soft and more receptive. I don't have to become so much of a tank.

You give so much credit to your friends in your performances and in the liner notes of your albums. To some degree, it's the same kind of transparency you're talking about now. You're being transparent about power and about what actually goes into your work. It's absolutely the opposite of the stereotype of the big-shoulder-pad woman—you're willing to share credit with your friends.

Well, I couldn't do anything if I didn't have the friends that I've had. They've influenced me and helped keep me from turning into a tank. Good friends help you process who you are and how to be in the world. The show in Olympia that you saw, my best friends were all surrounding me and singing my songs along with me. They were dancing, and a show like that—a person can't do it on their own. A person needs resources.

It does make for a totally different experience the person next to you is singing along, or the performer is handing someone else the microphone because she doesn't remember her own song. It totally changes the whole idea of DIY culture, if you're not just Doing It Yourself.

Yeah. Do It *Ourselves*. I'm lucky to get to be a crystallization of energy. When a really good show happens, that's what's going on. I can crystallize all the energy in the room. That's what I'm always trying to do.



Like with the intimacy thing—it's a hard thing to get to, to really let go of yourself, to just become this prism in the middle of things and just to reflect back everything that everybody has. It sounds kinda hippieish, but I feel like it's really what I'd like to be able to do.

It's interesting, though, because you've taken an artist's residency at Weiden+Kennedy. That's an awkward juxtaposition. How do you . . .

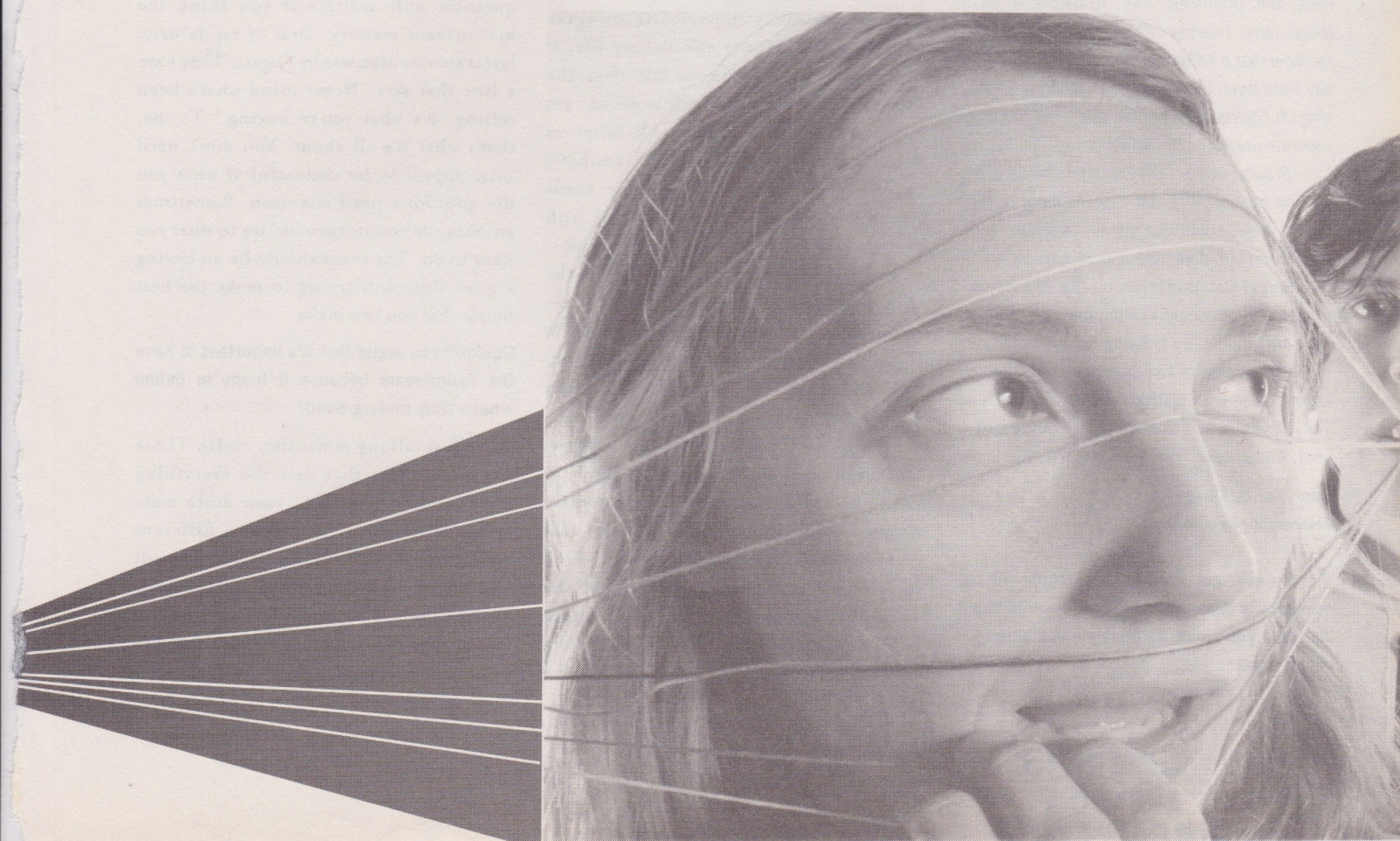
. . . deal with that? Well, the new piece that I'm doing, "The Touch Me Feeling," is really thinking about the ways that people form themselves. Looking at a person as this intentional mass of life: You're born and then you're a baby and you gurgle and you're just a ball of living. But how you style yourself, or how you package yourself up to move around in the world, there are so many different ways you could do that, and you have to pick one. You pick a style that you'll live in and a community of people that you'll surround yourself with who share your style and share your beliefs to some degree. My performance is about this whole

company that does marketing for this alternative mental health care system that makes all these different daily routines that you practice to keep yourself sane, and they market them to all these different types of people, you know? An ad agency is the perfect place to be for that. Essentially, they're studying the ways that people form themselves, and the things that people identify with. They study all the different groups in culture, the social types and social templates that people follow. They have a planning office, and the people that work in that department go to LA and interview, for example, kids who skateboard between the ages of 13 and 18. They study what appeals to them, and then they write advertisements using that information; which in turn, shapes what people want. I'm not all for it, but at the same time, I think it's interesting to watch that happen. ¶ I'm into the perversion of it. I probably watched maybe 30 hours of television in the last 10 years. I totally did the "I only buy my food at the co-op and I never buy new clothes and I'm totally on the outside! I'm livin' clean!"

thing. I totally lived *pure* clean, like so much more than you'd think would even be possible. If you'd told me that I'd be in a residency at an ad agency that did Starbucks ads, I'd be like, *fuck you! I will not*. But at this point, I've been on the outside and I know what you can know from the outside. I'm kinda psyched to know what you can know from the inside: Who are the people that make these ads? What do they want? How do they go about it? This is the *stuff* and you want it—how does that get made? I think it's fascinating.

And what are the answers to those questions? How does that work from the inside?

I've only been there like, three months. I've been on the run making stuff for my performance, so I haven't had much time to just soak it up, but I'm getting more to the place where I can get on the inside of what's going on and play around with it and watch what happens. It's funny because none of my friends have really been like, "Khalea, you're in an ad agency." Nobody's called me on that. I feel like we're all in a place where we're like, "I dunno. The world's dirty, man." ©



When it comes to death metal and grindcore as legitimate genres of music, you either get it or you don't—it's that simple. The first time you hear Napalm Death's *Scum* or *World Downfall* by Terrorizer, you'll know immediately if you're in the club or not. It's not reliant on whether you can tell the instruments apart or if you can understand one word the singer says within the albums' duration, it's a matter of whether you feel it or not.

JR Hayes feels it. In fact, I'd go as far to say that he's on to some next-level shit when it comes to understanding grindcore as a means of positive tension release via musical hatred. Though initially formed in 1997, Hayes' musical version of a psychiatrists' couch, Pig Destroyer, released a few split 7"s and a full-length album, *Explosions in Ward 6*, that made some waves in death metal circles. But the band reached tsunami levels with their 2001 grind masterpiece *Prowler in the Yard*. With the backing of a much larger label, Relapse, it was the first opportunity many people had to become intimate with Hayes' utterly despondent and violent take on the world through his eyes, mind, and pen.

Rather than your standard blood-and-guts lyrics established by standard-bearers like Cannibal Corpse and grindcore legends Carcass, Hayes' prose focused on obsession, fear, sadness, and, ultimately, love. To hard-core death metal fans, hearing lyrics like, "There was a rainbow like a halo over the world" might actually have been more frightening than the "dragging off cigarettes of human skin" line just a few seconds previous. Go figure.

Prowler in the Yard was a revelation of disgusting beauty. Why did it seem more dangerous to growl about one's feelings on an album with cover art depicting a man sawing off his own limbs? Can love really do this to a person? And why is grindcore making me *think* so fucking hard? Fueled by growing up and continuing to live in an area of Virginia where outsiders are looked upon with distrust and no one smiles at you, Hayes seems to have plenty of reasons to vent. Metalheads have feelings, too, you know.

Interview by **Dave Hofer**

Photography by **J Hubbard**

Do you ever get worried that people will automatically discount things you have to say or not take you seriously because you sing for a metal band?

Well, we play grindcore. grindcore isn't going to appeal to your average person, and it shouldn't. It appeals to a select group of people that like things that are as extreme as they can be. That's what we go for because that's the way we like our metal. Me and Scott and Brian are three very different people, but one of things that we share is that when we listen to metal, we want to listen to the most hate-filled, violent, fast, angry thing that we can put our hands on. We forced ourselves to become that.

Do you think that striving to be the most "hate-filled and angry" has more of a negative impact on yourself rather than being a release?

It's totally both. Any relationship should be like that. Just sitting down with a pen and paper and trying to write that shit is hard. It's difficult for me, but it's rewarding. That's what keeps me going. That's why I don't have to go to church.

Your lyrics have a lot of religious imagery in them. I'm curious if you think that religion has any bearing on modern culture anymore?

Of course it does. Religion influences *everyone*. Just because you're not a Christian doesn't mean that you're not influenced heavily by Christianity—you're surrounded by it. I'm surrounded by all sorts of ideas that I don't necessarily subscribe to or agree with, but Christianity affected my life, if only in my writing. Like you said about the imagery, it's classic imagery, it doesn't get any more classic than that. All religious beliefs aside—purely from an aesthetic sense—it's great stuff. ¶ Everyone needs something. Some people are happy with their families, some people with their jobs, in my case, it's music. Music did all the things for me when I was younger that religion does for other people. I don't know if people get off communicating with god, but communicating with a Van Morrison record, *that's* religious to me. ¶ I don't consider myself a Christian but there's a lot of Christian ideas that I would live by. I try not to be a violent person, I try to forgive people for their trespasses and all of that good stuff, but it's the enslavement of the imagination and the enslavement of the mind that I don't subscribe to. There's a lot of wonderful things about Christianity and a lot of wonderful Christians, but the

one thing you *have* to do is believe and I just can't. I'm too cynical. Sorry, god.

That's interesting, because when I read what you write, it doesn't seem to be the most forgiving stuff.

My brain is a mass of contradictions. I'm the most bitter cynic and the most fucking stupid romantic at the same time. Stuff like that doesn't work on paper, that's just the way that the human mind works. With my lyrics, I'm singing in a heavy metal band. There's a certain aesthetic that comes with that that's almost unavoidable. The Melvins avoid it, but they're just doing their own wacky thing. But I sing in what amounts to a death metal band, so I'm taking the most negative parts of my energy and my feelings and trying to put that into words because I feel like that's the stuff that you scream about in a death metal band.

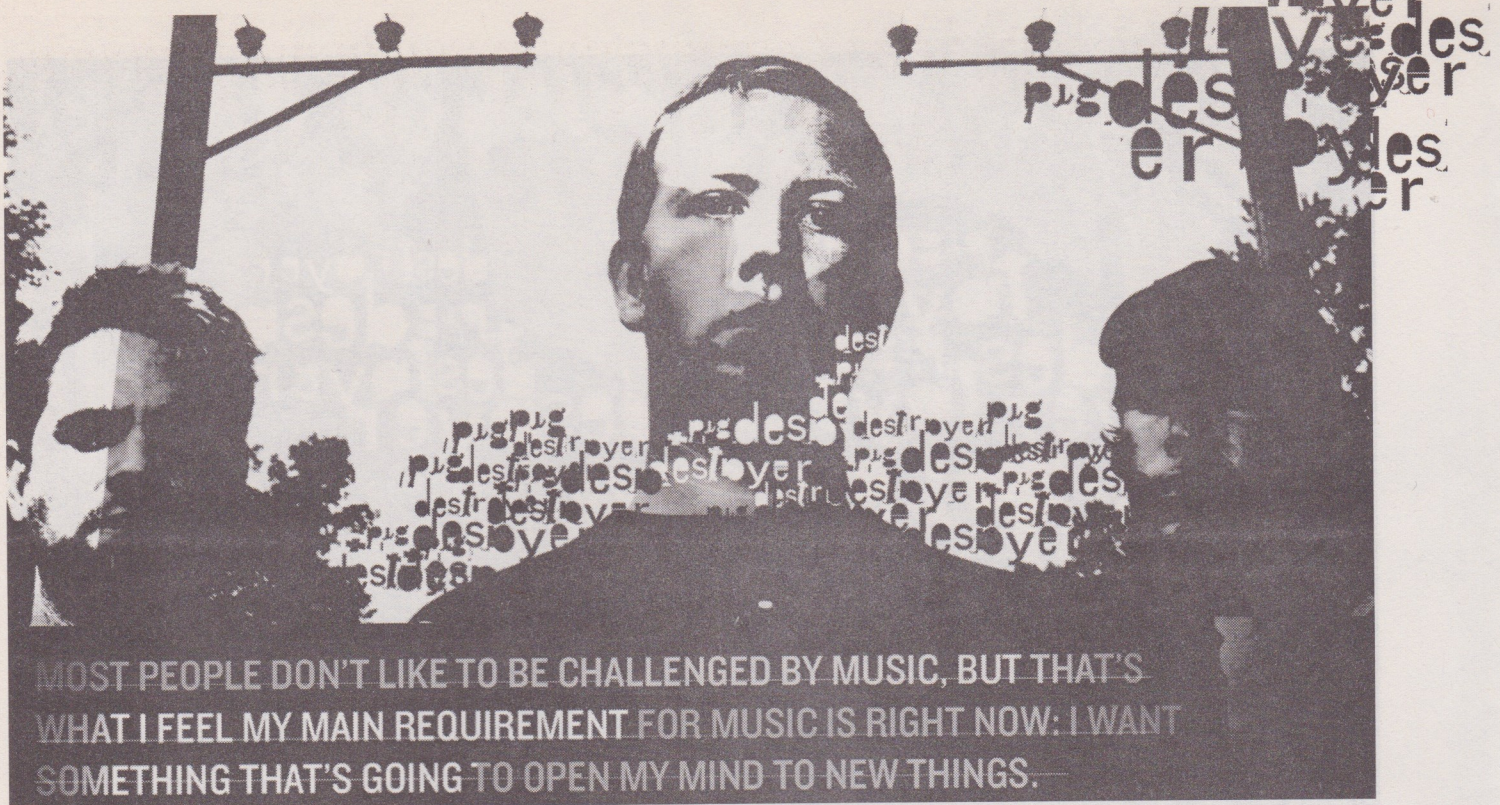
In the book *Choosing Death*, it talks about how bands like Napalm Death and Carcass started out a couple decades ago with their main objective to just play faster. To them, it was everything; it was their lives. It blows my mind that this was all happening when I was four. Do you think that 20-something years later, heavy music is still as relevant?

That's an *epic* question. The answer to that question only matters if you think the mainstream matters. One of my favorite lyrics ever written was by Fugazi. They have a line that says "Never mind what's been selling, it's what you're buying." To me, that's what it's all about. You don't need mass appeal to be successful at what you do; you don't need attention. Sometimes attention is counterproductive to what you want to do. The focus should be on having a good time and trying to make the best music that you can make.

Couldn't you argue that it's important to have the mainstream because it helps to define what's truly underground?

We're just talking semantics, really. Those are huge terms that describe everything from Michael Jackson to some death metal band. In Japan, they have a different view of music than we do. When we went over there, we were treated as I imagine *any* band would be treated over there, no matter how big or small. Because we were in a band—because we were artists—they





gave us great respect. That's not something that you really get in America from a club owner or a promoter. I think over here the mainstream thought is that metal is for dumb, retarded, ignorant rednecks. It's definitely not considered up on the same level as other types of music. To me it's all fucking music. Whether it's John Coltrane or Brutal Truth, if it kills, it kills.

True, but with more mainstream acceptance of heavy music—the return of Headbanger's Ball, for instance—do you think it still matters?

I think it always does. Think about any time in heavy music's history—or rock'n'roll's history for that matter. People are always going to say that rock'n'roll is dead, or that punk is dead, but then you go see a band like the Dwarves and you realize that punk *isn't* dead. Heavy music will matter as long as there are people that are into it. Will it matter on some grand socio-economic-political level? I don't know. I say Napalm Death for President. ¶ Let me say this: Earlier this month, I went with my roommate to see Huey Lewis and the News. Think about what you think a Huey Lewis crowd would be like, and it's *completely* the opposite. It's every type of person that you could ever imagine united under this flag

of Huey Lewis and the News. I think that that's how grindcore is going to be. It's got that youthful energy about it. It's punk, it's hardcore, that's all about angst. Being a teenager will always suck, so teenagers will always need grindcore and metal, unless somebody comes with some crazy-ass new genre of music in the next five years that's even more extreme and has nothing to do with grindcore.

Sometimes I think of my dad, who's in his '60s, and then I think of myself being in my '60s, balding with grey hair, and I wonder if I'm still going to think, "I could really go for some *Reek of Putrefaction* right now!"

The only thing that really matters is what you like *right now* and what moves you *right now*. It's not what's going to move you 40 years from now. Who could possibly know what that's going to be? I'm probably going to be deaf, so I'm probably not going to be listening to music. You listen to these records now, but years from now there's going to be some 15-year-old kid getting into Rorschach for the first time. The whole cycle starts all over again. When I drive to work in the morning, I drive past these bus stops, and there's these little kids that have Testament, Metallica, and Megadeth shirts

on—the same fucking shit that I was wearing when I was in middle school, middle schoolers are wearing now. Metal is for the kids, man! Us adults can't hog it—we have to give the punk to the kids! ¶ We'll both be listening to Carcass when we're 60 years old, but will your average Carcass listener? I don't know. Most people don't like to be challenged by music, but that's what I feel my main requirement for music is right now: I want something that's going to open my mind to new things. I heard that new Bjork album last week, and it's *completely* insane. I think that she might be the most cutting-edge person in music right now, if only for the fact that she's completely fearless and is trying to do something beyond what she's done before. To me, that's what it's all about.

I'm just worried that as we get older, people that got into it because of Headbanger's Ball will fall off because it's not popular anymore. We'll be 40 or 50 . . .

. . . and we're the only ones that like it?

Yeah, and then we die.

How about we schedule for us to make a call at 5:30 p.m. 25 years from today to see if we're still listening to grindcore? ☺

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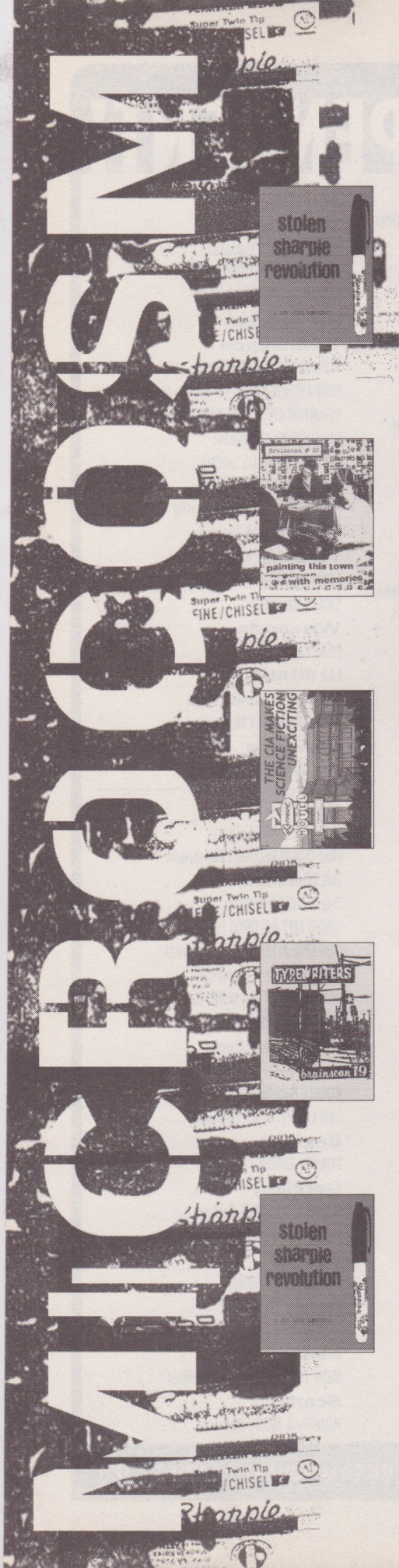
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Microcosm is one of those DIY companies that is so prolific, you wonder if the folks that run it ever sleep. Joe Biel and Alex Wreck run Microcosm out of a community center called Liberty Hall in Portland, Oregon where they write and distribute zines; provide a variety of politically-themed merchandise, including T-shirts, patches, stickers, and buttons; publish several books, including a fantastic zine resource book called *Stolen Sharpie Revolution*, a collection of cartoons from *Punk Planet* columnist Al Burian, a zine compilation from Urban Hermit and a recently published collection of the zine, *On Subbing*; they help to organize the now-annual Portland Zine Symposium; take time to teach people about zines and zine culture; and they are avid bikers who share my interests in the political aspects of cycling. In addition to all of this, Joe recently completed a video documentary about zines that he was finishing when we spoke entitled *\$100 and a T-Shirt*. (He also finds a few spare moments to review zines for this magazine, go figure.)

While sipping on a homemade beer from their next-door neighbor, I had the pleasure of talking with Alex and Joe about zines, bikes, and politics.

Interview by **Zack Furness**

How did Microcosm start?

Joe: It's a little bit hazy, but I think it was February of 1996. I was just lonely, bored, and wanted to contribute something to society that was greater than myself. It seemed like doing distribution was the best way to do it within my means.

Alex: Joe started in Cleveland.

Joe: There were probably between five and 10 people doing zines in Cleveland at the time, and I was distributing all of those. I had a bunch of stuff that you just couldn't get anywhere else—some of it was records, some of it was zines from other places, and we also started doing stickers. I moved to Portland because Alex moved here and

that's when the distro started to really change faces; we got books and zines and it got to be primarily focused around the context of people who were doing stuff and had no outlet for it. That was the one intent that has stayed with us.

Alex: We had the idea of doing a zine resource guide called *Stolen Sharpie Revolution*. We had all these ideas, and although I'd read books on zines before, this was more DIY. I kept talking about it and talking about it, and Joe finally said "You're never going to be able to steal enough photocopies to actually put it out, so how about we print it." That was the first thing we actually sent to the printer to have done, and that was in 2001 or 2002. It was a natural extension of only being able to go so far with things, and then having to take it to the next level.

What do you think is the best thing about doing zine distribution?

Alex: I like the people that you can meet. To be able to travel and realize that people you know are all over the place. We usually get people who are ordering stickers and T-shirts and then they figure that they might as well try this other stuff. Then we have people who order all the time and they write letters, saying things like "I didn't pay my rent this month cuz I wanted to buy zines." [Laughs.]

Joe: Those addicts, and the newbies, send us the most heart-warming pieces of correspondence and funny anecdotes that entirely makes this worthwhile. We hang up the best of those. We get letters from a lot of people that either have no access to the culture, other than the Internet, or have no way of connecting with it. I think that's what people really appreciate about Microcosm—they see us as really being an outlet to that sort of education.

Is that really motivating?

Joe: Yeah. I take on a lot of projects that will lose money even though now I'm not sup-

posed to do that anymore, because my wage is paid through these projects. [Laughs.] But I still lean towards the ones that I want to do.

Alex: In this day and age, individuals don't feel as empowered, or as important, as they should. It's especially important to encourage young women to feel like they have a voice. I feel like zines do that very well, not just in realizing that you have a voice and other people want to read it, but that zines are very community oriented—you have a peer base *automatically*. I think that's something really important in zine culture.

Joe: We do a lot of teaching. We guest teach at the university of Oregon where there's a class called "Zines and Democracy." It's always kind of weird when you're up there because it doesn't really seem like they care, and then six months down the road stories trickle back to us that "so and so's brother was in that class and he thought you guys were incredible." Or some kids will pick up steam through the year and start doing their own thing. I taught this class of talented high school students two years ago, and that was one of the best ones because they were *into* it. They really wanted to know how they could do it, and how to make it work for them. A lot of the public schools here are starting to incorporate programs where the kids are actually learning about zines, or about how to produce them.

From the project's logo to a lot of the stuff you distribute, bike activism plays an important role at Microcosm. How did you both get into biking?

Alex: I didn't really get into biking as a lifestyle until I moved to Portland. I used to walk everywhere and take public transportation and all my friends said "You gotta get a bike!" I encouraged Joe to start walking places and he encouraged me to ride.

Joe: I got excited about biking because I thought it was morally a good choice for me. I was kind of fed up—used to deliver pizzas and I got in two big car accidents within a

year where the paramedics told me I should have died. I thought driving wasn't a good idea anymore, so I didn't buy a car after the last accident and I've bike commuted since then. Six years ago now, I guess. ¶ That was a lot of it, but it was also punk politics. I had two friends when I moved into my first house who were into biking and we would just ride around *everywhere*. That was the first time I started commuting as an adult, and it was good to have people around who were into it at the same time.

Alex: The more you make yourself aware of the world around you, the more you learn from your environment. You start embracing what you do have and then you find other people who embrace it. From that, it grows from a personal choice to being part of your lifestyle and your politics.

Joe: Seven years ago, even people in the punk scene didn't really get it. People would throw eggs at me when I rode my bike! It wasn't how it is now, where it's becoming a lot more popular and accepted. I think people are really starved for information about it if they don't know. If they do know, they want the encouragement or something to go home and read when they're not biking—something to show symbols of pride.

By putting out zines and doing the distro through Microcosm, do you explicitly try to provide biking-related material?

Alex: People are really into it. It's not just people who are hardcore into biking, I think other people are reading this stuff because they are curious. I think that within our culture right now getting people interested in bicycles is really important. ¶ People are interested in them. There's definitely curiosity for it, especially within our ridiculous car culture. People realize that we can't keep going like this. Bikes are a good alternative for that.

Do you focus your efforts more on people who

are already into biking—like a lot of folks in the punk scene—or do you try and reach people who don't know much about it?

Joe: I'm pretty bored with punks, to be honest. I'm more interested in finding people who are taking it to a new level and their doing their thing. For example, there's folks around here who are challenging the city to do the things that they want done—like shutting down blocks for car-free day, or putting in more bike lanes for safety, or building bike racks. The things that they do are more interesting to me than younger punk kids riding their bikes.

Alex: Portland has a really long legacy of people involved with community who appreciate where they live and feel empowered about changing the things that are important to them. And, of course, there's a bunch of people that move here from other places, but they're still embracing the idea that we have control over the area that we live in.

Joe, at the same time you're still very connected to the zine community as well. Tell me about the zine documentary you are working on?

Joe: I've put in close to 1,000 hours now. It's mostly interviews, all informational footage, and now it's about making it more visually interesting. The premise is to explain zines to someone who doesn't know what they are, as well as someone who does; to explain the culture and every detail about it.

Alex: And to make it interesting so that people who aren't into zines would want to watch it.

Joe: Yeah, so those folks can learn something too. I've learned a shit-ton just doing it. I want to pass that on.

What would you like to see happening within the zine community and the bike community?

Alex: I'd like to see more zinesters on bikes.

Joe: I'd like to see more bikers doing zines, just 'cause we can't get enough of them. ☺

We get letters from a lot of people that either have no access to the culture, other than the Internet, or have no way of connecting with it. I think that's what people really appreciate about Microcosm—they see us as being an outlet to that sort of education.





fransisco

“I guess everyone knows I had cancer,” said Fran and his new band—the Gasoline Fight—as he got onstage at Chicago’s Bottom Lounge last October. Before the crowd could squeeze out an uneasy laugh, their first song, “The Truth About Doctors,” hit the crowd like a Mack Truck. It’s a song that makes you feel like the bottom dropped out of your belly because you can hear singer/bassist Francisco Ramirez playing tug-o-war with his own life.

Ramirez comes from a long line of tough Tex-Mexican cowboys. He grows a thick, black beard. He’s tall and barrel-chested. So how is it possible that a something that starts out smaller than the point of a pin—a single mutated white blood cell—leads to so much damage? It’s all been difficult to believe, but Ramirez has come out on top.

Ramirez was a loyal employee and patron of the Fireside Bowl when it first opened its doors—and warped lanes—to Chicago’s thriving

independent music scene over a decade ago. And he was there the day it shut down faster than you can say, “What they fuck?!?” His latest project, the Gasoline Fight, is completely made up of fellow former Fireside staffers with Scott Anna (ex-Sweep the Leg Johnny) on drums, Scott Flaster (ex-Small Brown Bike) and Stan Wood (Peralta) on drums. After a difficult five years that included two bone-marrow transplants, countless medications, physical isolation, and a sudden awareness of his own mortality, he’s finally getting back. In fact, he seems happier than ever.

We grabbed a cup of coffee at Atomix in Chicago, and he explained how he managed to make it through some really tough times.

Interview by **Cate Levinson**

Photographs by **Andrew Ballantyne**

It seems that a lot of the people who were in the punk scene in the early 1990s are still around Chicago, even though most of them didn't become full-time musicians. A lot of people always playing in at least one band, if not two or three—

Despite the fact that they're not necessarily becoming successful?

That doesn't seem to be their motivation.

That's very true. When I was at Columbia, we were all in bands and no one really went anywhere with it, until there was this explosion in 1997 and 1998. Those of us that didn't get picked up at that point got used to it, and just kept doing it, creating new side projects, finding other interests or careers. But we still wanted to make music because it was so much fun. I don't think that anyone saw it as a reason to quit, we were having fun. For the most part none

of us got bitter towards people who did get more recognition, maybe there was a little bit of envy, or jealousy; but we're all still friends. I know that when I got sick it was really important that so many people cared.

When did you get sick?

I was diagnosed in January of '99, and then we went on tour in February of '99.

Jeez, why did you do that?

It was a small tour, and we had a new 7" out. We were going to Texas, where we always did really well. Plus they put me on this medication and within 10 days of being on it I felt almost 100 percent.

So you went to the doctor feeling sick, you weren't diagnosed during a routine physical, right?

I was really sick. I had a high fever. I was hallucinating. And I was still going into work everyday, because I didn't know what

I was dealing with. I thought I just had the flu. And then the other thing is my stomach was out to here (*holding his hand about six inches from his body*) because my spleen was inflamed, but I had no idea what was going on. At the time, my health insurance was very limited, so I didn't go to the doctor unless I knew it was an emergency.

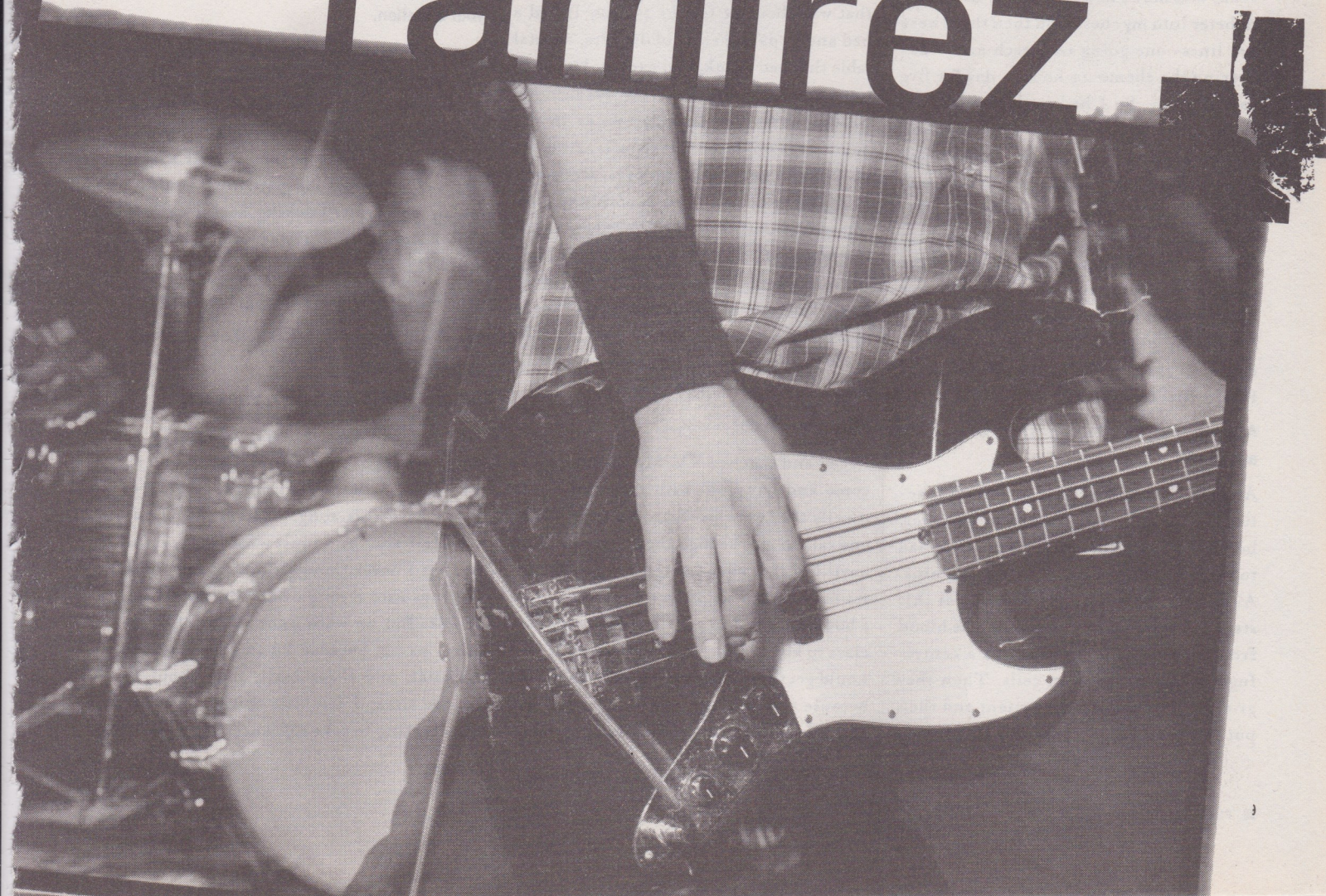
But you thought it was your stomach, right?

Yeah, I thought I had gas. I thought I had some serious gas.

For future reference, you don't get a fever from gas.

Well, I thought I had the flu and gas. My girlfriend at the time forced me to go to the hospital. And they did all these tests and they told me that my white count was really high, and that it looked like I had cancer. But I was really out of it, and I guess I wasn't really paying attention be-

ramirez



cause it didn't hit me until a few days later when the doctor told me in front of my parents. They had flown in from Mexico, and the doctor was explaining what kind of cancer it was and it finally got through to me, and I panicked, I really started to freak out.

That's so scary.

Yeah, but then the pills killed off all the mutated white blood cells, which is what was making me feel so sick. So I felt a lot better at first, and I went on tour. And when I got back I started injecting Interferon into my legs every morning. I've been really lucky, when you consider how much medication I've had to take over the last few years, that I didn't have any serious side effects. I mean, everybody tells you you're going to get really sick. Interferon—which is supposed to make your immune system attack the cancer cells—makes a lot of people really sick. I got a fever after I took it the first time, but after that I was fine. Even with the chemo.

Really?

Yeah, well here's how they did it: they ran a catheter into my chest, and then there were two lines—one going into each arm—delivering the chemo 24 hours a day for five days straight. So I had to do everything, sleep, take a shower, go to the bathroom, with these lines pumping stuff in through these lines. That sucked, but I was pretty much fine except that I lost all my hair. My reaction was really mild. Some people have really violent reactions, but I got out of the hospital and was pretty much OK. If you're being treated as an outpatient, you have to stay within 30 miles of the hospital for 100 days after the treatment. And we got ready for the first transplant.

A bone marrow transplant? I hear those are painful.

Actually, it wasn't so bad for me. It was actually a lot more painful for my brother, because he was the donor, and they had to take the bone marrow it from his hips. And then the second transplant was this stem cell transplant where they take blood from a living person, put it in a centrifuge to isolate the stem cells. Then they give the stem cells to the patient and then put the used blood back into the donor,

but in order to get enough, they had to do it continuously for six hours. ¶ They have to put the donor under anesthetic the whole time. So, getting the transplant is a lot easier than donating. When they gave me the stem cells, they just stuck it right into my catheter. Plus, it turns out my brother and I are a nine/10 match which is really fortunate. We always thought we were a lot alike and now we know for sure. It was probably why I did so well. And in the hospital, I saw people who were suffering way more than me. Some people would get sick, and if you get a cold when your immune system is compromised like that it is really bad. Waiting to get out was the most taxing part because after the first transplant I was in isolation. I could only see my parents through a piece of glass and talk to them through a telephone. Only the doctors could come into the room, and they had to be in a totally covered, from head to toe: full gown, and a mask. Goggles. Everything.

How long did you have to stay in there?

Two weeks. It was awful. I was in a room that was about 12 feet by 15 feet. It had a bed and a chair, a chest of drawers, a metal table that had a sink, and a toilet, but I had to wrap up my own "business" because you couldn't have any standing water in the room or it might breed bacteria. And the room itself was a negative pressure room, which means that the air is constantly being sucked out, and very filtered air is being blown in. So the doctors would come in, and when they left, all the air would be sucked out, and with that any airborne spores or bacteria that they happened to carry by chance would be sucked out of the room. It was horrible.

What did you do?

I read and watched TV. My parents would come and hang out with me—well technically they were in the room next to me, and talk to me through the telephone. And anything that they wanted to give to me—say they wanted to give me a newspaper, or a book, they had to put it through an autoclave to kill any bacteria that was on it. So I would get these newspapers that were hard, because all the water had been sucked out of it. And I had to do exercises in the room,

so my muscles wouldn't atrophy. I tried not to sit in bed too much. They let me have a laptop. And luckily the room had a giant window so I could see outside. There wasn't much to see in Houston, but at least I knew that it was daytime, and I knew I wasn't on a spaceship. Also, I couldn't eat any fresh fruit or vegetables, everything I ate had to be cooked.

That was the first transplant. Did you know from the beginning you'd have to have a second?

No, I came back to Chicago, and a year and a half later one of my blood tests showed that there was some protein in my blood that's brought out by cancer. They said they were going to do another transplant. Since I was still healthy I decided I wanted to get all the recordings done first. So they put me on medication and I came back to Chicago to record with Gasoline Fight, Crimson Teeth and the Traitors. We got it done quickly as possible, and did the transplant right after Christmas. So I gave myself two months to get everything out of the way before the transplant.

Other people might put recording on hold in your situation.

I guess I have always been that way, and this was no different. I wanted to go to work, and I tried never to cancel practice. I always tried to push through it. I probably shouldn't have pushed myself sometimes. I wasn't a good patient; I wouldn't let my body rest. Looking back I can say that I should have rested more, but I'm still here.

When did the Gasoline Fight get together?

We didn't actually get together until the spring of 2003.

Did you plan to write about being sick?

No, I didn't even know I was going to sing. I thought someone else would do it. I've never actually written songs before. ¶ We have this song, "The Truth Doctors Tell You" and I just wrote that on the fly, but I never thought I would put those feelings into a song or any of those situations. But we were under a lot of pressure, partly because I had to get to the hospital, and I was really mad about it. At the time, I felt that things were really starting to take off, and I didn't want

to put it on hold for so long. And I was frustrated. The doctors kept telling me that everything was going to be fine, and it wasn't true. You could say that song came out of frustration: when they told me I had to do another transplant—most people only have to do one—I couldn't help but think the worst. Everything is OK now, I guess. I had never written lyrics before. Using words to express myself was a whole new experience. ¶ There's another song I wrote, it's about this girl I dated for a little while who was into self-mutilation—cutting herself—I guess it was a relief for her. She would put cigarettes out on her skin. She had scars all up and down her arms and legs. People who know about that, knew what the song was about; but for everyone else it's a little ambiguous. At the time it seemed so awful, and there was nothing I could do about it. I think expressing how tough it was—putting it into words—was good for me. I don't always want to make the songs too personal, but I find myself doing it anyway. I have to admit it's a really good outlet for me. I don't think I've ever

had an outlet like this before. I'm able to get a lot of anger out, and I don't carry it around like I used to.

Did being sick make you line up your priorities differently? Or have you always been so goal oriented?

I think something changed when I was in the hospital the first time. At first I thought I would have to stay in Texas for good. When I got the OK to come back to Chicago I was so excited, and it had this incredible effect on me: my priorities changed around. I'm not as mean as I used to be. I used to be total asshole, and I'm not anymore. I take things as they come a lot more. I don't get grumpy like I used to—it surprises me sometimes. My attitude toward the people around me is different.

Do you think it has something to do with the way your friends treated you while you were sick?

I do. Most people knew what was going on, I didn't keep it under wraps; I joked about it a lot. But I learned to listen. People would ask me how I was feeling, and I don't know why but somehow I learned how to sit

down, and let them in, rather than, blowing them off, or saying "Fuck off! Get away from me!" I learned to wait, and listen to what they had to say. I think it's an important lesson, because my illness brought up a lot of issues for people. Unfortunately, a lot of people have someone in their life who's had cancer—or they've lost someone to cancer, or a serious illness of some kind—and they need to talk about it. They need someone to understand; and I'm in a pretty unique situation, I guess. Being in this position has taught to be more responsive. I guess I didn't have to be; but for the first time, people aren't just coming up to me talk about music. We all relate to each other a little differently now. I know that on my end, I'm really grateful for the way they responded. They were so supportive, and I can't tell you how much it meant. In some ways, I may have been more important to me than the way my family responded. I'm not saying my family wasn't important—they were amazing—but I expect that from them. I didn't expect it from my friends—it was a huge part of why I did so well. ☺

The doctors kept telling me that everything was going to be fine, and it wasn't true. You could say that song came out of frustration: when they told me I had to do another transplant—most people only have to do one—I couldn't help but think the worst.



Ask Antonino D'Ambrosio, and he'll tell you right out that the thought that's been lingering in the back of your head is true—we only need one band anymore: The Clash. Everything since that great band sounds small and afraid. Everything since then lacks the sense of threat and hope and possibility. Everything since then just leaves me wondering out loud, “Is this song even about anything, I mean *anything* at all?” With seven records, a career spanning more than a decade, and drawing from such rare musical influences as ska, dub, R&B, the blues, rock'n'roll, and finally punk, Joe Strummer penned some of the most intelligent, radical, and important music of the last century.

In his book *Let the Fury Have the Hour*, an amazing collection of articles, essays, interviews, and reviews, editor Antonino D'Ambrosio proves what we've all quietly known for so long, that songs like “Guns of Brixton,” “Spanish Bombs,” “London's Burning,” and “Garageland,” were some of the first musical compositions to transform punk into an actual social movement. Paging through the varied stories in the book, one thing is very obvious: after more than 25 years, Joe Strummer and the Clash still remain the only band that matters.

Interview by **Joe Meno**

What was the first Clash song that got you hooked on the band?

The first song that really got me hooked was “Clampdown.” I heard it for the first time when I was 12 and it appealed to me on an entirely new level. The song represented something like a manifesto to me,

a kid growing up in an immigrant, working class family outside of Philadelphia. It was able to capture the anxiety I was already beginning to feel early on in the Reagan-era where his economic policies were essentially a thinly veiled attack on the poor, working class, and immigrants. I'd heard the song through my cousin, who introduced me to the music of not only the Clash, but the Jam, Elvis Costello, The Ramones, and others. But “Clampdown” moved me to discover more of the Clash, and after quickly learning every song on *London Calling*, I discovered their first self-titled record, *The Clash*. This album, which I consider to be the group's best—and the greatest punk record ever made, as well as one of the great rock records ever produced—completely connected me with the band because the politics were equally as powerful as the music. With outstanding original compositions like “London's Burning,” “Complete Control,” “Career Opportunities,” “White Man in Hammer-smith Palais,” as well as the audacious cover of reggae great Junior Murvin's “Police and Thieves,” it was clear that the Clash were raising the bar as one of the great rock bands, revolutionary in both musicality and content. ¶ Finally, I paid tribute to “Clampdown” by placing the lyric “Let Fury Have the Hour”—the whole lyric is, “let fury have the hour/anger can power/ D'you know that you can use it?”—as the title for this book. It's a testament to the enduring impact the song still has for me.

What three songs do you feel stand out as Joe Strummer's finest and most meaningful?

That's a difficult question to answer, since there are many songs he recorded both with the Clash and post-Clash that are true gems and thereby remain meaningful to me. So I may have to take some liberty here and break this question down into three categories: original songs with the Clash, cover songs, and songs composed as a solo artist. ¶ First, the three songs recorded with the Clash that endure for me are “Magnificent Seven,” “Clampdown,” and “Washington Bullets.” As I discuss in the chapter titled “Let Fury Have the Hour,” “Clampdown” is a stark account of labor in Darwinian capitalist society. It hits hard as it presents the contradictions that force us to believe that if we work hard, don't complain and don't rock the boat, we can get ahead; step on whomever you wish, it doesn't matter, just look out for number one. The song expresses the anxieties of working class youth who were wanted only for menial jobs to be part of the state's repressive apparatus, or to join racist right-wing movements. Yet, in classic Clash style—and what would come to define Strummer as a creative-activist—the song offers a forward-thinking, positive message. The song advocates an alternative: the need for working class rebellion. “Washington Bullets” has always had a deep resonance for me, as it takes on Western imperialism—specifically US-led covert activities aimed at destroying democratic movements in Central and South America. At the time Strummer wrote this song and the Clash recorded it, they were arguably the biggest band in the world. This was a brave and intelligent song that manages to pack a

THE CLASH'S CLAMPDOWN IS “A TESTAMENT TO THE ENDURING IMPACT THE SONG STILL HAS FOR ME”

LET FURY

strong historical analysis with a prescient comment on the state of the world that still rings true today. "Magnificent Seven" is an engaging attempt at rapping, but the content of the song, again, displays Strummer's power as a writer. The song is homage to New York City rap and the burgeoning hip-hop movement. It presents a pointed condemnation of a disaffected society as well. I've heard that Mos Def is rumored to be recording a cover of this song. ¶ Something that the Clash and Strummer did throughout their career is attempt covers of songs that really challenged them as musicians. These songs also challenged their listeners to seek out and discover new music. The Clash made the Bobby Fuller "I Fought the Law" wholly their own as their version helped to foster their image as "rebel musicians." Covering Toots and the Maytals' classic "Pressure Drop" was another bold move, as they now took on reggae royalty. The Clash's approach to the song is quite interesting, simultaneously capturing the spirit and energy of punk and reggae—not a small feat. I have to include the cover of "Police and Thieves" as well. The song itself is a powerful social comment that endures. To see the Clash while at their fiercest perform this in the opening of the film *Rude Boy* is very moving. ¶ Finally, Strummer's work with the Mescaleros produced perhaps his most thoughtful and politically aware music since his days with the Clash. The three tracks that remain important to me are "Shaktar Donetsk," which appears on *Global A-Go-Go*, and laments the fate of refugees, "Arms Aloft," from *Streetcore*, which

is Strummer's newest protest anthem and "Long Shadow," also on *Streetcore* penned for Johnny Cash. In my opinion, Strummer's final album with the Mescaleros was his best since his days with the Clash and offers perhaps some of the finest politically charged music he has ever made.

How do you think the Clash and Strummer contend with the fact that as "rock'n'roll rebels," their records appeared on major label Capitol and later songs like "Rock the Casbah" became radio hits? Do you think this tension eventually lead to the end of the band and Strummer's most productive period?

I think they dealt with this the best they could. It was critical for them to have the opportunity to get their music and message out to as many people as possible, which a major label afforded them. More important is to understand that they were able to meld anti-establishment ire with wonderfully fun and engaging music—a difficult thing to achieve in any circumstance and one that they certainly pulled off. Yet, this had some serious limits and consequences for the group. First, as young musicians who were more concerned about getting their music out, they found themselves signing a contract that hugely favored the record company—10 albums, 10 years, \$100,000. The band had immediate success with The Clash, as it became the largest selling import in US history—and still remains so—but the label quickly took issue with their sound even before they became disenchanted with the band's politics. They wanted to refashion the band as "new wave" only a year after

the release of their first album. The band disagreed and won that argument, but the record label essentially started to withdraw support, particularly after the Clash decided on Bo Diddley as its support act on their first tour of the US. All sins were briefly forgiven with the release of *London Calling*, as the band ascended to new creative heights that translated into critical and financial success. However, when they presented the label with a three-record album—*Sandinista!*—that they wanted to release and price as one album, the label made them pay—literally. The difference in cost had to come out the band's royalties. ¶ What ultimately led to the dissolution of the band was in large part due to Mick Jones increasingly losing himself in what he detailed as ridiculous "rock stardom" trappings Strummer and the Clash manager eventually fired Jones, who was not getting along with anyone in the group any longer. They discuss this event in heartbreaking candor in Don Lett's excellent documentary on the Clash, *Westway to the World*. ¶ I would contend that this did not end Strummer's most productive period, though it certainly put it on hold for the better part of a decade. In the late 1990s, he was doing some great work with his newest band, the Mescaleros, and his final, posthumous, album, *Streetcore*, was his best work since his days with the Clash. Also, his level of political activism had become much deeper and more aware. The experience of going from "hero to zero," as he described, it allowed him to reflect and come out the other side emboldened to continue fighting on, which he did until the end. ©

ANTONINO D'AMBROSIO

HAVE THE HOUR



Stephanie Sinclair grew up in the punk scene of South Florida, but discovered her calling at around age 20, when she first picked up a camera. In the last few years, her calling's lead her onto the battlefield and into the lives of those in the midst of war.

Having worked for various newspapers around the country during college, Sinclair landed a job at the *Chicago Tribune*. After four years of varied assignments, the *Tribune* sent her to Iraq months before the war to familiarize herself and *Tribune* readers with the people and country. When the invasion began, she often traveled with coalition troops, but decided against embedding—a high-risk proposition few journalists opted for. She was filmed by Esteban Uyarra for his documentary on unembedded journalists, *War Feels Like War*. She served as an example of the humanist and ethical side of the discipline upon the movie's worldwide release at film festivals and on PBS in the US.

As the war continued, Sinclair pulled up roots in Chicago and moved to Baghdad, quit the *Tribune*, joined the photo agency Corbis, and continued photographing throughout the country (including coverage of insurgent factions), and in Afghanistan. Her work has since appeared in *Time* (including a *Time* Photo of the Year), *The New York Times*, *Marie Claire*, *Rolling Stone* and other publications.

In the last few months, as the violence in Iraq escalated and the political landscape further destabilized, Sinclair, now 31, recently moved to Beirut, Lebanon—a safer residence than Baghdad. "Once the beheadings started," she said, "it was time to go."

Stephanie Sinclair has received some of the most prestigious awards in the field: a Visa D'Or from the Visa Pour L'Image festival, the World Press Photo Contemporary Issues Award, and a group Pulitzer Prize in 2001 while at the *Tribune*. She has an exhibition of photos at the Peace Museum in Chicago running through November 2004, runs Photobetty.com, a website dedicated to women in photojournalism, and features her own journals and photos on StephanieSinclair.com.

Interview by **Jon Resh**

Photographs by **Stephanie Sinclair**

Did you ever think you'd be photographing what is perhaps the conflict of our generation?

I certainly didn't think I would be covering a conflict of this magnitude. I don't think any of us thought we would be in a conflict like this. But yes, I always wanted to experience photographing conflict at least once, so I could better understand what people in those situations go through. If I couldn't handle it, at least I'd have known why.

What were some of the biggest surprises living in the Middle East?

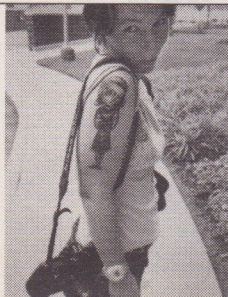
Hmmm. I never thought a place like Beirut existed in the Middle East. It is so modern and full of Western culture—a gay scene, clubs, though not many hardcore kids. The subversive youth subculture here mostly consists of David Bowie and Bob Dylan fans and the Slipknot kids. It's funny, I was at a street fair and there was this band playing rock songs. They were pretty good, but they only did covers. Exact covers, actually. If they did the Cranberries or Coldplay, they sounded *exactly* like them. They were talented, but it was weird. ¶ As far as the war in Iraq goes, I was most surprised by the people's resiliency. It is pretty amazing. They have been through so many years of crap—serious torture and mental abuse and now this mess of a war. It amazes me that some seriously sweet, hospitable people still exist there. Of course, those aren't the ones you hear about on the news.

You've had a lot of interaction with US soldiers, both positive and negative. How would you characterize your experience with them? From your perspective, has the way they interact with you and other Iraqis changed since the outset of the invasion?

Of course. [US soldiers] were greeted with kisses and thumbs-up when they came into the country. Now, 18 months later, they are being attacked and blown up on



STEPHANIE SINCLAIR





I

I Bombing of UN Headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, Aug. 20, 2003
US soldiers comb the ruins of the UN headquarters for bodies after a cement truck packed with explosives detonated outside the building. More than 20 people were killed and at least 100 people were wounded in this unprecedented suicide attack against the world body.

a daily basis. The new ones still don't know why the Iraqis hate them so much. When I talk to them, I have to explain that it is not who they are as individuals, but what they represent: our current government and the choices, including many mistakes, made in conducting the war in Iraq. ¶ I met a young soldier who was manning an Abrams tank in Sadr City, basically the ghetto in Baghdad. He was part of the 1st Cavalry division, which had just arrived in Baghdad like a week earlier. These guys were basically told that they would be in a pretty safe area of Baghdad, as the Shia, who make up Sadr City, have been America's biggest supporters since the fall of Baghdad. ¶ However, what these guys didn't know was that resentment from lack of electricity and jobs had grown and was about to boil over. Think about how pissed you would be if you were watching your family members and friends go hungry, and there was no electricity for 18 months. So when the Coalition decided to close a main newspaper complaining about the American occupation, all hell broke loose. ¶ So I was talking to this 19-year-old black kid sitting on the top of the barrel of his tank and he said to

me, "I don't want to kill no one. But I have to go home." This was constantly the position I found myself in—where I could easily relate to both sides.

Your work shows a great affinity for the Iraqi people. How have they treated you in return?

They are lovely people as individuals. They will give you everything they have. But, unfortunately, they are seriously fucked up. Who wouldn't be in that environment, though? I mean, look how fucked up we are when we come from broken homes. They go through the same stuff—drunk parents, divorce, infidelity, whatever—but then they have all of this shit on top of it. ¶ They have always treated me very well because they know that I am trying to understand where they are coming from and be a voice for them. And my closest Iraqi friends are all complete perverts, or as we say there: *min-yooks*. So we get along well!

You've had a special vantage point on this war, being so close to the action. Overall, what's your opinion of the Bush Administration's handling of the war from the Iraqi end?

I think the individual soldiers on the ground are trying very hard, but the ad-

ministration is clearly so into a specific agenda and so blind to the grave mistakes that have been made. And now I don't think we can get out of this. I can only see it getting worse from here. For everyone. ¶ When I first went to Iraq, I didn't meet a single person who was not welcoming to Americans. For example, I was at this anti-US march when I saw these guys dressed as suicide bombers, so I ran over to them and started taking photos. When we got to the end of the march, one of the guys pulled his white hood off and asked me where I was from. So I told him I was American. Immediately, he smiled and said, "Welcome, welcome!" As he shook my hand furiously, he told me his sister lived in California. ¶ Recently I read an article written by my friend Mick Ware for *Time* magazine. He was interviewing Iraqi fighters in Fallujah and he asked them what they would do if the Americans actually pulled out of Iraq. The fighter responded that he would keep fighting them, even if it meant on American soil. This was the most depressing thing I have heard in the close to two years I spent there.

Some of the most powerful images of this war came from the amateur photography of

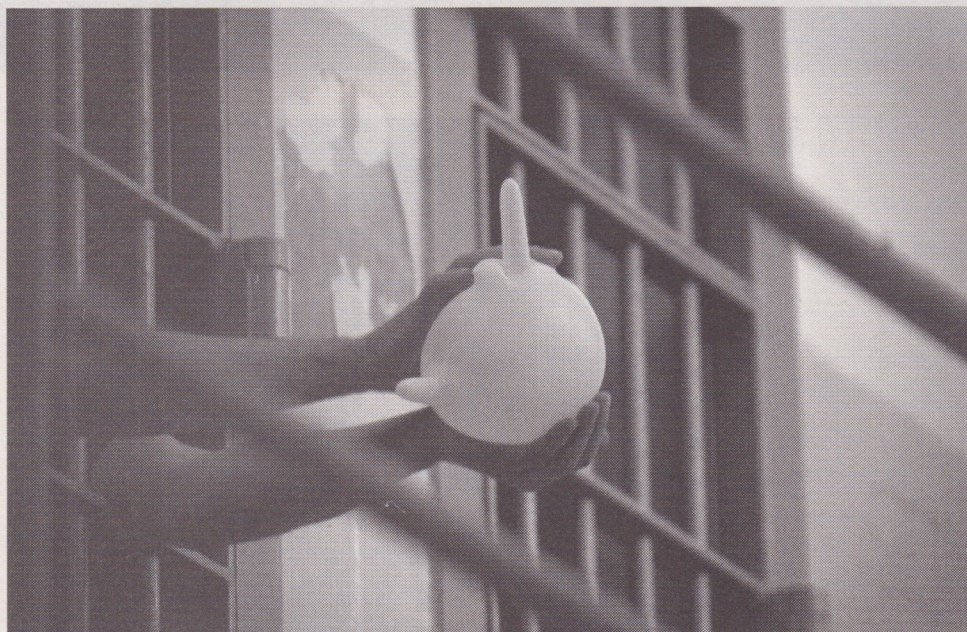
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2 Injured child looks for family members after bombing, Oct. 27, 2003
With blood on his shirt, an injured Hussein Ra'ad looks for family members inside his home, located next door to the International Red Cross headquarters in Baghdad. Car bombers struck the ICRC and four police stations across Baghdad, killing about 40 people in a spree of destruction that terrorized the Iraqi capital on the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, according to police and Red Cross reports. The Red Cross later pulled out of Iraq as a result of the incident.



3



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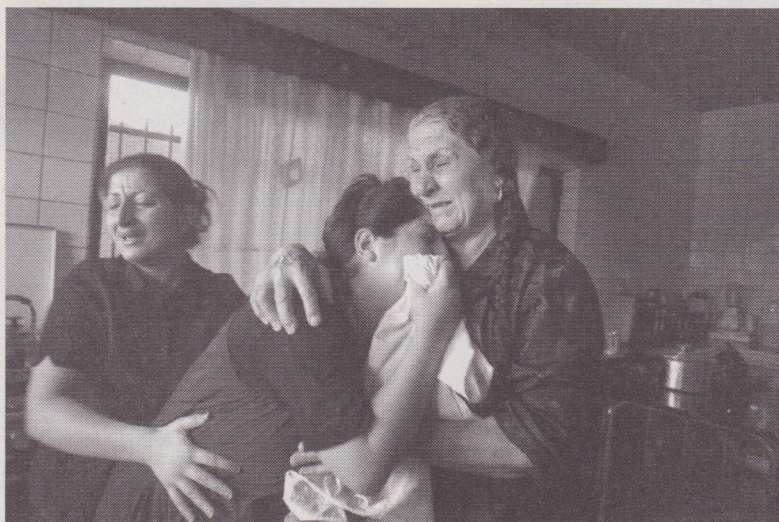
3 Soldiers evacuated from helicopter attack, Nov. 2, 2003
Wounded soldiers are evacuated to Germany after a surface-to-air missile hit a US transport helicopter outside Fallujah, killing more than 15 soldiers. In less than one year, members of the 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) had performed more than 1,900 medical evacuation missions transporting more than 3500 US soldiers and 780 enemy prisoners of war.

4 Detained, Apr. 14, 2004
Prisoners are jailed inside one of the Sadr City offices the week after clashes between American forces and the al-Madhi Army.



5

6



5

The Swordsman, Nov. 7
Portrait of "Ahmed," a resistance fighter in Fallujah, who says his belief in Islam gives him the strength to fight the West. Before the war, Ahmed was also known as the Swordsman. He was responsible for cutting off the hands of thieves and traitors under Saddam's rule.

6

Iraqi family grieves in aftermath of UN bombing, Aug. 20, 2003
A wife mourns the loss of her husband, a taxi driver who was waiting outside the UN headquarters when a cement truck packed with explosives detonated outside the building.



7

Abu Ghraib prison guards. As a person who's spent time at Abu Ghraib, what's your take on this?

Well, it shows you the power of photography, no matter who's behind the camera.

Because of your high profile, your work has received a surprising amount of criticism. How do you respond to negative reactions?

It is good to be exposed to the different opinions that people have about what I do and keep it in mind. I am confident in my intentions, and work hard to tell the human part of both sides of the story. I try to be fair and try not to make too many judgements with my photography, but in some ways you can't help it. As the late Richard Avedon said: "All photographs are accurate, none is the truth."

Do you ever have feelings of guilt in taking photographs of people in moments of grief or danger? Do you ever feel as if you're profiting off of their suffering or exploiting them?

You would think that is the hardest question to answer, but I resolved that a long time ago. I mean, we are definitely not getting rich off this. I am not working for Halliburton out there. I am a freelance photographer for crying out loud. ¶ As far as photographing people in grief, I usually photograph them only after being invited to do so. I don't do a good job in the sense that I get too freaked out if I think they don't want me there. The last thing I want to do is cause anyone any more pain.

What do you hope is the end result of your work? Have your photos had any effect on events or people's lives?

I just want to remind people back home

that even though we have lost more than 1,000 American troops—which sucks—they knew when they signed up for the military that they might end up fighting some day. A conservative estimate is that about 15,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed since we invaded. They did not sign up for this. They had no say if the US came in or not. And all of these people are someone's brother, sister, mother, daughter, son. So the next time you read that 50 Iraqis died in a bombing (which will probably be tomorrow), please remember this. ¶ And no, we rarely see the results of our work, but I can only hope it has some effect.

Are there echoes of anything from your past in the punk scene that resonate in what you do now?

Well, the righteousness of the straight-edge scene is cool. I am definitely not straightedge, but I appreciate the idea of trying to keep things pure. Also, journalists are dorks just like punk rockers, so I am surrounded by similar people! ¶ Actually, I met a fellow punk-rock journalist in Baghdad who is now my boyfriend. We really connected because we came from the same background, and we're able to develop that into what we do now. He actually used to write music reviews for *MRR* and still has amazing taste in music, which brings a bit of home out here to the Middle East. It's really cool to be understood on that level, but in a very different situation.

Amid all of the horrendous, terrible things you've seen and experienced, what do you do to relax and have fun?

We rent movies a lot. They're all bootlegged, but some are pretty good quality. And it's cool because, for a couple of hours at least, you are not in the Middle East. I mean, I am very happy with what I have chosen to do with my life, but it is also great to take a break. ¶ We also go out a lot in Beirut. The nightlife is pretty cool and the food rocks—Italian, Lebanese, amazing seafood. It was once called "the Paris of the Middle East" because it was so livable. And sometimes I go back to the states and see my old friends.

What compels you to continue doing this work?

Amid all the crazy, sad stuff we see, we are also exposed to some of the coolest, strongest, most courageous people. You see the extremes of humanity—the best stuff along with the saddest.

Any predictions about the possible outcomes of this war?

I have no idea, but I am not optimistic. I think we are looking at a civil war before the end of next year.

What should we know about what's going on in the Middle East that we may overlook?

Um, that they are not all terrorists. Seriously, the US isn't making any friends out here. In fact, they are ruining the best contacts we have for stopping terrorism by insulting and making enemies out of the whole Muslim world.


Is any photo worth dying for?

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7

Claiming bodies after house-to-house fighting, Apr. 5, 2004

Locals gather to pick up the bodies of dead loved ones at a Sadr City hospital hours after a fierce shootout in the Shia neighborhood in Baghdad. It took a column of tanks to restore quiet and force the militiamen out of police stations they had seized after police fled. This was the beginning of a six-month showdown with radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, which greatly furthered the burden on U.S. troops who were already fighting the Sunni guerrillas' bloody insurgency.



PILOT TO GUNNER

In the large, overpopulated pond that is the New York music scene, Pilot To Gunner is a medium-sized fish. They don't have Interpol's fashion sense, The Strokes' straight-up pop licks, or TV On The Radio's iconoclasm. They understand and accept this.

But they are not demure. Singer/guitarist Scott Padden—along with guitarist Patrick Hegarty, bassist Marty McLoughlin, and drummer Kurt Herrmann—makes no qualifications about his band. Pilot To Gunner is better than a lot of hyped bands, he says simply over a beer in the band's home of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Nevertheless, they don't stick out on the “cat-walk” he calls Williamsburg.

There, Pilot To Gunner's brand of powerful, hooky DC-style post-punk is probably considered passe. *Get Saved*, their full-length released in early 2004 on Arena Rock, found the band streamlining the sound they established on their 2001 debut full-length, *Games At High Speeds*.

Although replete with intricate guitar work, ambitious vocal melodies, and interesting rhythms, the sound is nevertheless *rock*—and not the type of post-ironic fuzz the music industry declared “back” in recent years. It's the kind that never went away, championed quite unironically by the likes of Foo Fighters, Rocket From The Crypt, Jawbox, and others.

While the music industry may love pretentious rockstars, there's no pretension in Pilot To Gunner's punishing tour schedule. The band toured for four months straight at the start of '04: the States, Europe, Australia and, of all places, Russia. Pilot To Gunner played three shows there this summer, a feat practically unheard of for bands that aren't superstars. Even more stunning, they *drove* there from Latvia. For those keeping track, that's 30 hours one way to Moscow on axle-breaking “highways,” with frequent stops after being pulled over by—and bribing—authorities.

As great as they say those shows were, four months of Pilot To Gunner-style touring (i.e., with heavy drinking) left the band drained physically, emotionally and financially. During the final leg of the tour, the band made its third stop in Chicago in four months before heading out for a West Coast tour opening for the Suicide Girls' burlesque show. In Chicago, Padden's voice was failing, and the band looked as if someone had been slowly draining blood from them.

After limping home to Brooklyn, Pilot To Gunner canceled most of a scheduled two-month fall tour in order to focus on recuperating and writing new material. Aside from some local shows or quick jaunts, touring isn't in the picture for a while. For now, Pilot To Gunner is happy to be back swimming in their home pond.

By **Kyle Ryan**

Photography By **Jen.Knee**



How were you able to get along while you were on tour for four months? It seems inevitable that you'd really get on each other's nerves.

McLoughlin: Some of us did almost kill each other—multiple times! That's only natural, but you can't dwell on the problems because that's not so fun. Get over it, because you're on tour, and you're lucky.

Padden: I feel like I probably test everyone's patience more than anyone else does.

Why?

Padden: Well, I have a lot more to be responsible for as far as my voice, and when you combine the habits [*motions toward his beer*] that come along with being on tour for us . . . When I lost my voice after three and a half months, I just no longer had the wherewithal to put any effort into saving it. I just gave up; I just drank myself stupid every night. I went to the doctor when I came home, and she said, "You know, your voice is exhausted. There's nothing you could have done for it, but on a personal note, it would have made your bandmates feel better if you had just taken it easy and attempted, you know?" ¶ We were playing with big crowds on the Suicide Girls tour. We could only play like six songs; we had to cut some good songs out of the set that I couldn't sing. I think it's just when I fail them, which I did, that it's stressful.

When you were in Chicago during that final leg, I could tell there was this hope in your voice that you were going to have to cancel the Suicide Girls shows and go home.

Padden: There kind of was, yeah. For the first time, I think we all felt like "Let's just cut our losses and go home." When we did get home, and [Arena Rock Records owner Greg] Glover started talking about the next two-month tour, none of us even had to speak to the other to know that none of us wanted to do it. We canceled it. I don't regret that at all. I'll never complain about something like touring, but that was a little long.

There's a palatable weariness in Scott's voice when he talks about what you guys have done this past year or so, a feeling that he can't do the same thing again. How do you feel about everything?

Hegarty: Tour was amazing and completely draining as well, especially finan-

cially. We've been cursed from the start. Only now, six years later, are we starting to break even—on band expenses, *not* living expenses. We're not trust-fund kids. We all have to work, we all have our own careers outside of the band, and we live in the most expensive city in the country. All that being said, touring is better than working. I'd rather be poor and on the road than in an office. Touring can be dangerous as well—we've gotten way too fucked up, and it has taken its toll.

McLoughlin: It's unfortunately not really possible for grown adults that don't come from tons of money to tour all the time. We did that this year, and I'm still totally fucked, even though we've been home and I've been working for several months. It's really hard to catch up.

Do you think you overdid it?

Padden: I think we kind of decided that we're not going to do any kind of extended touring unless we're supporting something, because we just *can't* afford it. It's not an ego thing, it's not a pride thing, it's just we can't afford it anymore. We have drained everything—financially, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, damn near physically—*everything*. ¶ I'm conscious of the fact this is a *Punk Planet* interview, and that money shouldn't enter into it, but [this is the] real world. We're all destitute now. We owe our European booking agents money, so we really need to start thinking that way.

How do you know if touring's been successful? A spike in sales? More people next time?

Padden: I think both of those things. But it's crazy: We did four months of touring, did the video ["Barrio Superstarrio"], did the single to radio, but we got *more* of a response for getting mentioned on *One Tree Hill* on the WB. Do you know about this?

No!

Padden: I guess there's two girls at a college radio station, and one says "What are you listening to these days?" And she says "Keane, Modest Mouse, and Pilot To Gunner." Then it cuts to her friend typing our website into her computer.

Yeah, *Punk Planet* had similar experiences with being on *Gilmore Girls*. But back to the touring—

how did the Russia thing come together?

Padden: Three years ago, in 2001, we had a show scheduled in a basement at a house in Bloomington, Illinois. There was a keg and about 20-25 people. This guy John lived in the house—he was in college and put on the show, and he was clearly insane—he said, "I'm studying Russian. I'm going to move to Moscow, become a promoter, and bring you guys over." And we're just thinking [*dismissively*] "OK, that's definitely going to happen." But starting last year there was an e-mail exchange with him. He's living in Moscow as a translator at a bank. He got us two shows in Moscow, a show in St. Petersburg and a show in Riga, Latvia. He made good! That's the thing I always impress on people, especially bands just starting: Do *not* poo-poo any show. Playing in a basement to 20 people and a keg got us to Moscow.

Did you have trouble getting into Russia as a band?

Padden: We had to pay off the soldiers at the border.

How did that work?

Padden: The soldier claimed we had broken the rules as far as getting in. I think it's a ruse they use. So he said, "Just put something inside your passport." And we gave him 100 Euro.

Hegarty: I was nervous the whole time, from the moment we paid the bribe to enter until we left.

Did they give you shit about selling merch or anything as you crossed over?

Padden: Not after we paid them. I guarantee you that the bombs that blew up those jetliners in Moscow—someone was paid off to get those in. We got pulled over a bunch of times by the police on the highway, and once we paid them, there were no questions. They didn't care what we had in the van. We had a big Mercedes Sprinter van and *nobody* cared what was in there. But would you if you could get a month's salary out of some touring American band? I don't blame them. I would have done the same thing if I were them.

Spending 30 hours straight on the road to Moscow, you got to see a lot of Russia. What sticks out from that?

Padden: What sticks out most is the nothing I saw, and I mean *nothing*. The “highways” were awful, though. After the border and all the way to Moscow, there was nothing but tiny gas stations and forest. I think that’s why no one has ever been able to conquer Russia—Napoleon, Hitler—there’s just *too much space* to cover between entering the country and getting to Moscow. Now, when the sun came up, what sticks out most in my memory is getting pulled over about eight times by the police, who then took our “speeding ticket” money in cash on the spot.

What’s it like being in Red Square, having grown up during the last part of the Cold War?

Padden: I was very conscious of that. I grew up concerned with how much canned goods my family had—I was convinced I was going to die in a nuclear war. I would sit and watch TV with my father as a child and picture people in the Soviet Union watching TV with angry looks on their faces—because they were *the bad guys*. I pictured everyone angry over there.

What was it like going over there? What were the crowds like?

Padden: The crowds were *fucking awesome*. They were huge and they were great, like holding up posters and bought a lot of shit. Everyone wanted to come hang out with us afterward.

Throughout the tour in Russia and Europe, did you find that people wanted to talk to you about American politics a lot?

Padden: In Germany I got that a lot. Some-

one told me that the Bush administration is like the Nazis, and as much as I hate the Bush administration, I have to take issue with that because *nothing* was like the Nazis, you know what I mean? I hate the Bush administration—I have *zero* love for them—but that was an absolutely unfair analogy. It’s insulting. It’s offensive.

With the Iraq war so unpopular in Europe, did you find that when you were over there that people would insinuate that maybe we *deserved* the September 11 attacks?

Padden: I didn’t get that. I think someone in this bar will definitely hear me and kick my ass, [*lowers his voice*] but what I think a lot of people don’t take the time to think about is that, you know, when your country leaves its footprint and takes from everyone, that someone’s going to come back after you, and they’re going to do it however they have to. I obviously have no love for al Qaeda, but when you feel threatened, you fight back however you have to. And a country like this, you can’t go take everything from everyone and act as if these people are opponents of the best aspects of your country when they’re actually opponents of the *worst* aspects, the things that you can change. ¶ I think we were spared a lot of that sentiment because people coming to our shows knew that [as] an independent band from the US, we’re not policymakers. I think they’re probably aware that we most likely think the way we do. But you do get the drunks that will come up, and maybe politics is just the reason right then that they want to get in your face as an American,

you know? I had a few different people say “I don’t like America; I don’t like Americans,” so I would say “Have you been there? No? Well, go there. See what it’s like.” I like being here; but I don’t like *everything* about it.

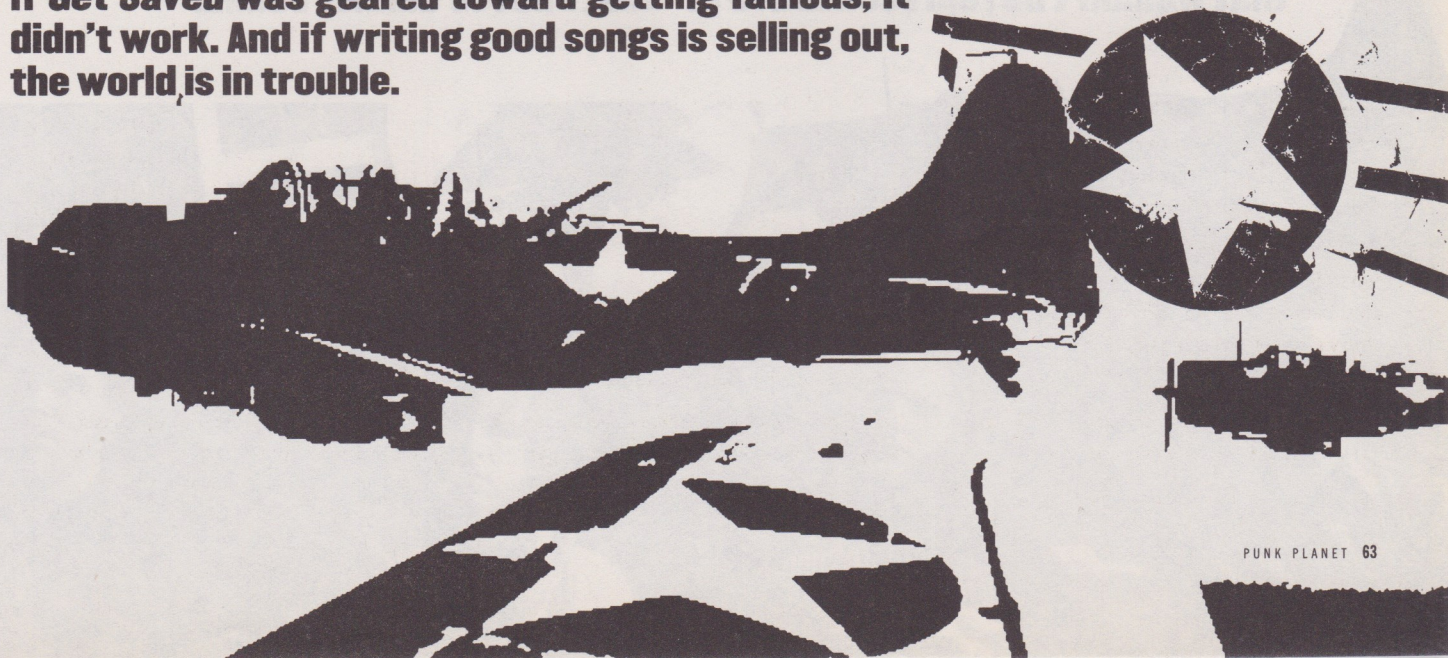
New York City is an easy place to feel ambivalent about. Scott’s said the city has a been a tough nut for you guys to crack because there are “so many bands and so many venues.” But really, that could be said for music in general. There are so many bands and so many places to find them.

McLoughlin: The *world* is a tough nut to crack; I don’t think it matters where you are. New York has a lot more people to win over due to its size, but I think we do fairly well. However, to be considered “cool” in New York—that’s another story. We will never have what bands like The Rapture and Interpol have because we are just a rock band. I’ve accepted that, and I think we are great. What more can I ask for?

What level of success do you think you’d be most comfortable with?

Padden: I couldn’t tell you that. What I will say is—this is not going to go over well with the readership—[*laughs*]. I want to get paid. I’m tired of being broke. We’ve had a little bit of a backlash about *Get Saved* because a lot of people thought we had changed our style up to, like, get famous or whatever. But I don’t know how to have a full-time job. I only know how to make music. The punk thing is fine, but I need a place to live, and I need to eat, so I’m ready to get paid.

If *Get Saved* was geared toward getting famous, it didn’t work. And if writing good songs is selling out, the world is in trouble.



But what about the critique of the changing sound of the new record?

McLoughlin: If *Get Saved* was geared toward getting famous, it didn't work. And if writing good songs is selling out, the world is in trouble.

Padden: People that don't play music don't realize how difficult it is to actually make a conscious effort to change your style to get famous. I think very few bands actually do that, but people *think* they do. You just become better songwriters, which is the result of writing records and records and records. You become better songwriters, and the songs become more accessible. Bands don't want to make the same record over and over again.

Hegarty: There is nothing wrong with a solid-sounding record start to finish. Not once did we think of changing our sound for success. We still have the same complex parts; we just cut the fat when writing new songs. Feedback on this record was 98 percent positive. I've maybe seen a total of three bad reviews—and one of them from a qualified critic. We got three stars in *Rolling Stone* and our first-ever video in rotation on MTV2 and FUSE. That's success to me.

Padden: None of us give a shit if the fans want the same record over and over. As much as we owe everything we have to them, we can't allow them to dictate our output. They are the ones working full-time. They are the ones who have a place

to live. They are not the ones going out on tour and risking everything to make music. It's really easy to sit and send e-mails or put on your blog that Pilot To Gunner overproduced their record and are writing songs for radio and sold out. That's really easy—I could do that. But while they're doing that, we are the ones creating and doing things that they sit in their comfortable homes and talk about. So fuck them.

I don't know if J Robbins has ever overproduced something—it wasn't like Butch Vig or Rick Rubin recorded *Get Saved*. Did you get a lot of flack?

Padden: We got more than we thought we would get. We didn't really know we had a fanbase until a certain element of it turned on us. I've said this before: Any of those people, burn your Pilot To Gunner shirts. Throw your Pilot To Gunner records away. Don't come to the shows. We don't want you anymore.

You've worked hard with PTG for a long time. If I took unwarranted flack for "selling out," but didn't even have the spoils that come along with selling out, I'd probably be like, "Screw this. Excuse me, Geffen Records, but where do I sign?" Do you ever feel that way?

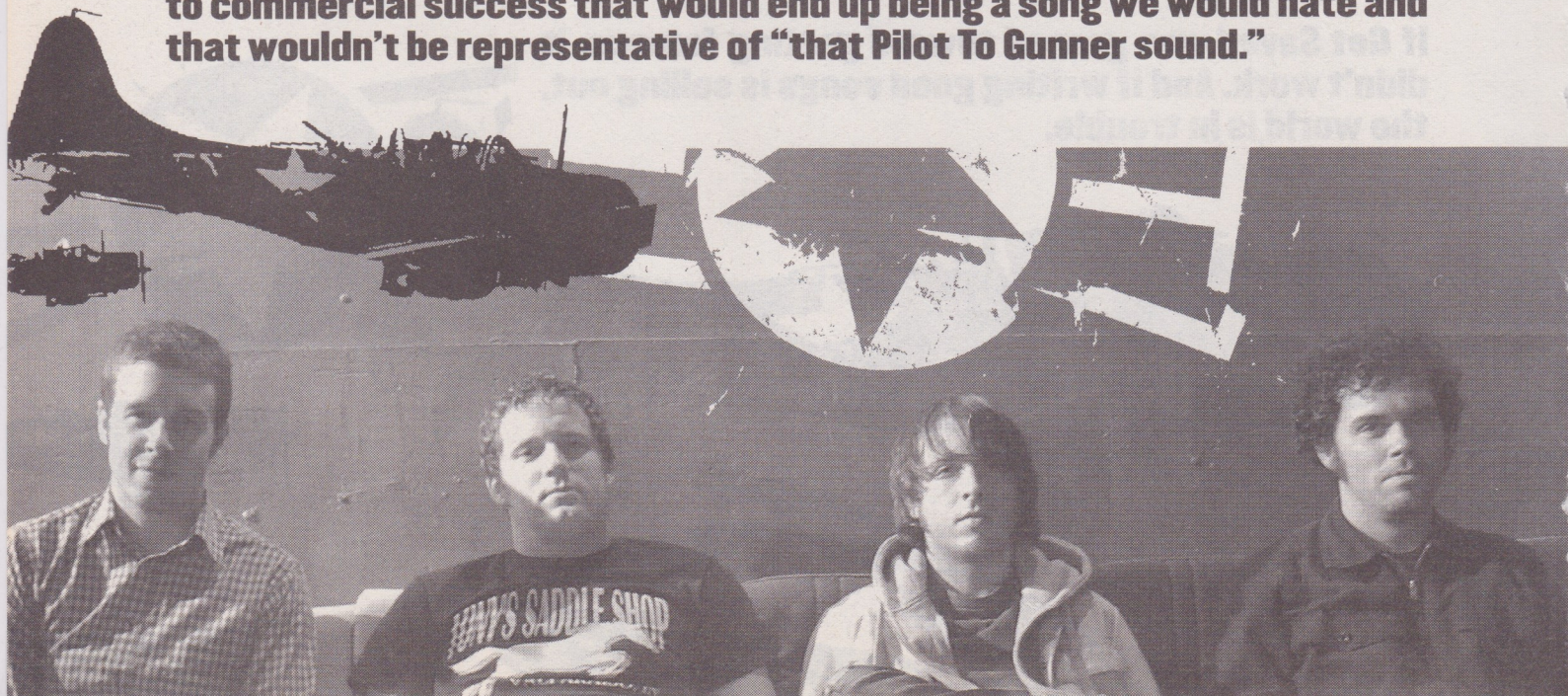
Hegarty: We welcome anyone who can better our situation. If it's a major, bring it on. Pay me the fuck out, 'cause I want to play music for a living and not have this double-life shit. Ideally, I would like to be big on a high-end indie. I strongly believe

in the indie scene; it's where I came from. But we're not Fugazi. Some of our favorite bands are/were on majors, i.e., Foo Fighters, Afghan Whigs, Jawbox, Seaweed, Rocket From The Crypt, etc.

But when people find themselves financially dependent on their band, sometimes it clouds their judgment, because what will support them financially is often pretty shitty. Do you feel like there's a balancing act there?

Padden: I know what you're getting at. I don't think we have the *ability* to write a song that would cross over to commercial success that would end up being a song we would hate and that wouldn't be representative of "that Pilot To Gunner sound." So there's really no balancing act for us. If we go for an even more polished record with more polished songs this time around, and we get even *more* shit for it than we got for the leap from *Games At High Speeds* to *Get Saved*, there's nothing we can say to that. If your natural progression as a band and as songwriters results in crossover success, well then so be it. We want as many people as possible to hear us. Do we want meatheads driving around in their Jeep yelling "fag-got" at weaker kids with our song blasting? No. Is that—or the potential—sometimes a natural result of mainstream success? Well, yeah, unfortunately it is. But we have a lot of shit to worry about before that level of success ever—or I guess I might say *never*—happens. ☺

I don't think we have the ability to write a song that would cross over to commercial success that would end up being a song we would hate and that wouldn't be representative of "that Pilot To Gunner sound."





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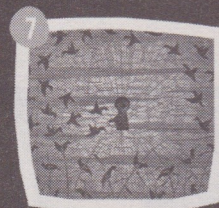
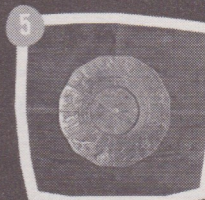
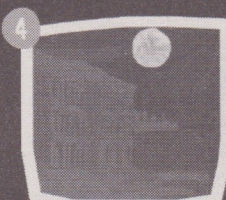
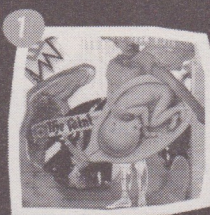
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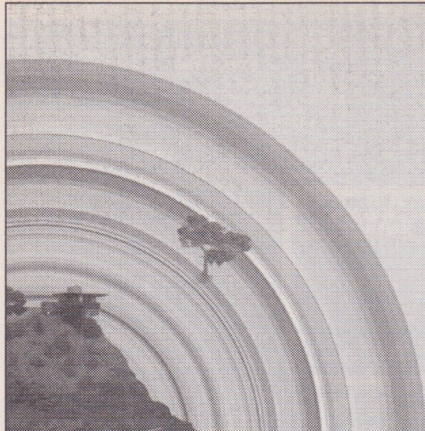
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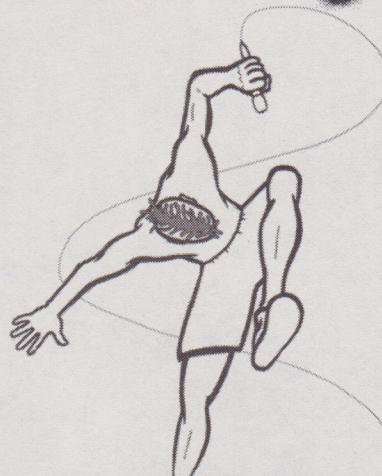
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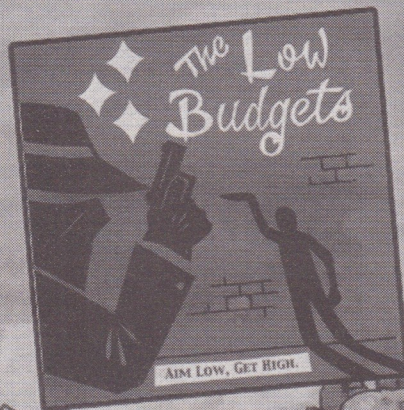
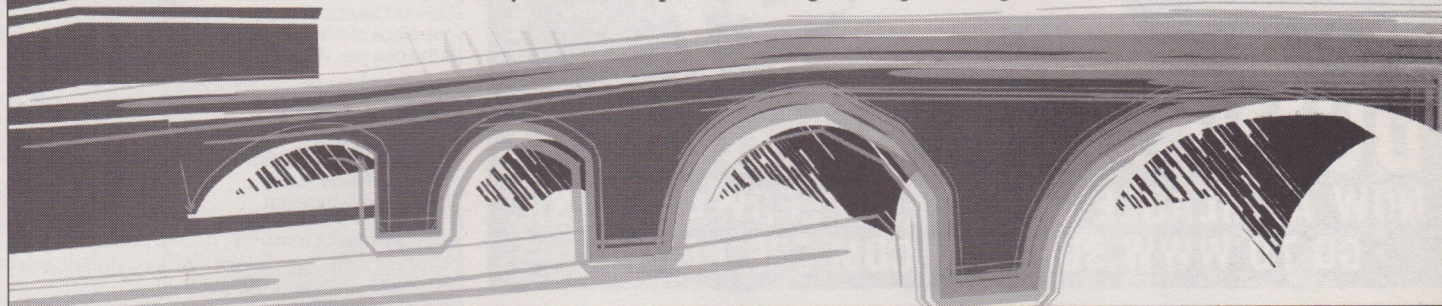
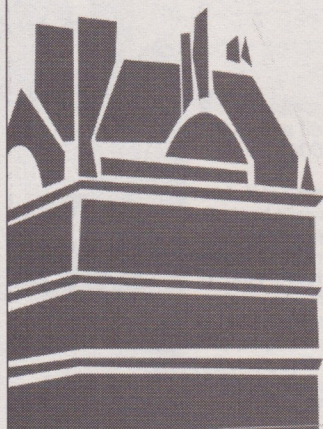
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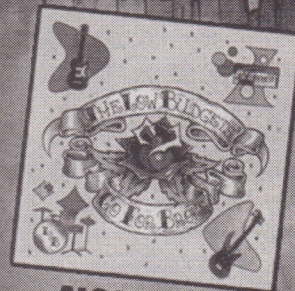
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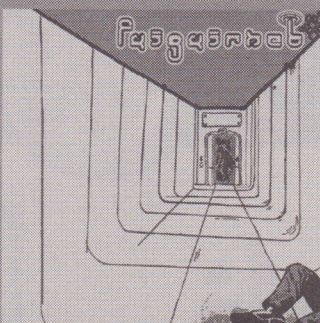
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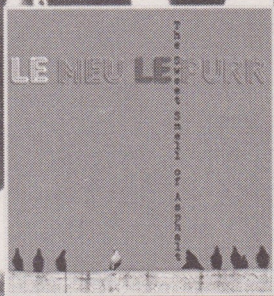
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Cerveja (beer) is the cure for everything in Brazil. If I have a stomachache, someone goes to get me a beer, even if it is early in the morning. If I am tired, beer. If I am thirsty, beer. If I feel full from eating too much, beer. If it is raining, then people do not go outside; they drink beer. If it is too hot, they have a beer to cool down. If the temperature goes below 85 degrees, it is too cold, so they have a beer to warm up.

One Friday my communist friend Ulix told me to join him to drink cachaça. It is much stronger than beer, similar to tequila, basically cane liquor, and the last time I had it I was not well for a few months. I was not exactly looking forward to a Friday night of communist rhetoric and cachaça because every other night of the week seemed to be filled with communist rhetoric and booze. I had already been to two cachaça museums in Ceará and Rio Grande do Norte and to a cachaça factory and had met several cachaça producers at their homes. Every region and state has its own flavor, and tastes do not cross state lines. Try suggesting Pitú (a bottle with a mean-looking lobster) in Ceará, and you might well get your head torn off because it is the drink of choice in neighboring Rio Grande do Norte. If you believe the infomercials, 51 is the *mania Brasileira* (Brazilian addiction), and Pitú is *uma boa ideia* (a good idea). Actually, it is not.

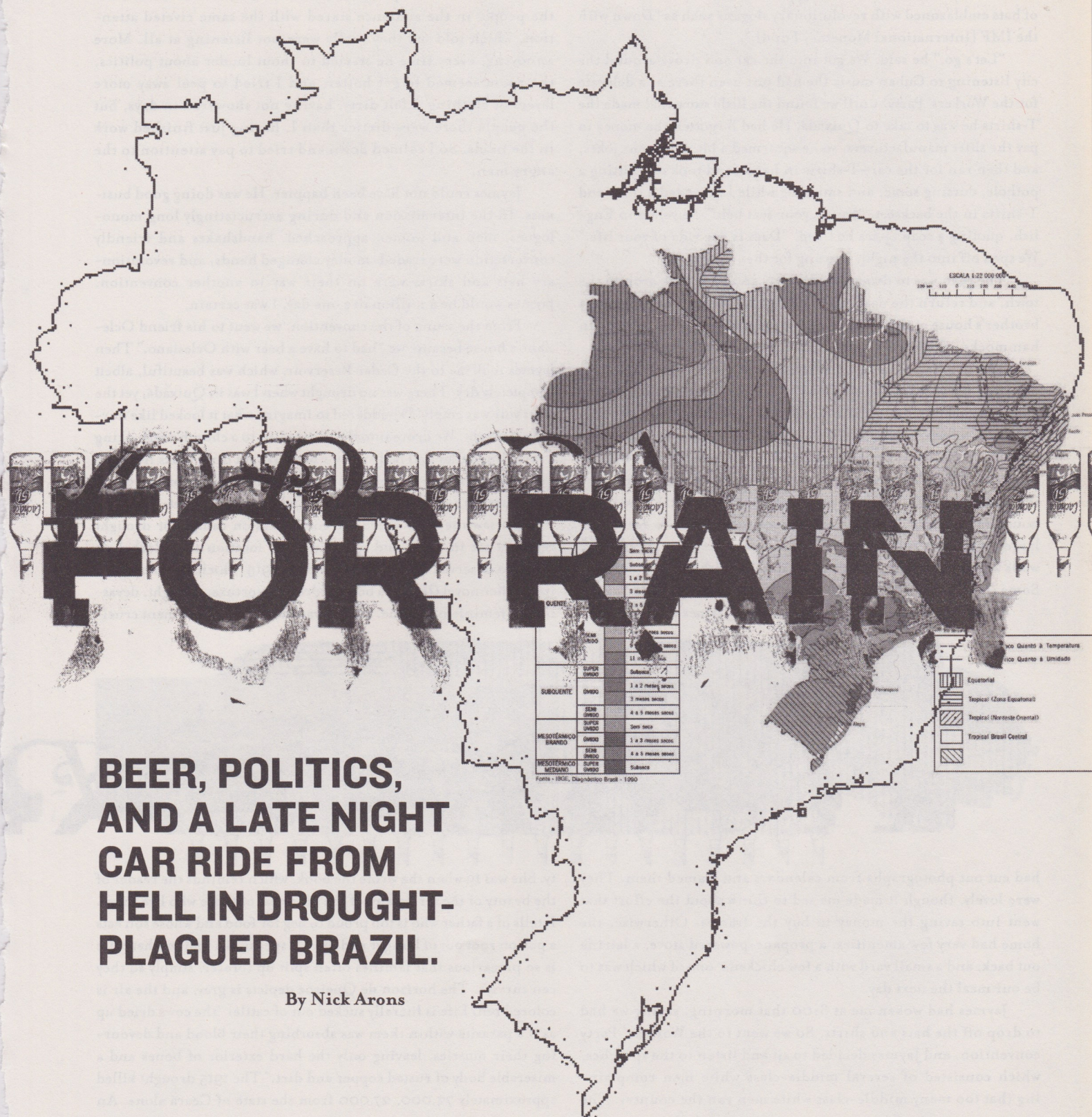
Every time I got near cachaça, the smell made me want to vomit, but if I wanted to be accepted into people's homes and lives, I had to become a cachaça expert, so that is what I did. I learned everything there was to know about it—the distilling process, the

flavoring styles, how to use a crab or lobster in the fermentation process to produce a sea flavor, how guava or mango adds to the alcohol level, as well as how to consume it correctly. But getting sick several nights in a row convinced me that perhaps the Mormons and other alcohol-free proselytizers have the right idea.

Long before this particular Friday night I had had enough of cachaça. Nevertheless, I said yes to Ulix's invitation, thinking I would pretend to drink while pouring the cachaça under the table or letting it run out of my mouth and not actually swallowing any. With any luck, I would run into Valter, a homeless poet who ran with the same crowd as Ulix and was helping me with my research. So when Jaymes Alves drove up to me that afternoon and said he was going to Quixadá—a town in the interior of Ceará—and asked if I wanted to join him, my answer was an immediate yes.

I said yes to get out of cachaça night, despite the fact that I had no idea who Jaymes was. He gave me his card before he drove off, and it said he was a T-shirt and hat salesman, and his name was spelled "JaYmes." I was fairly certain that I knew him from somewhere, so we agreed to meet at 5:30 that evening at the Workers' Party headquarters because he was delivering hats to Quixadá for the party. I later found out that his Christian name was James, but he had added the "y" to protest the fact that during the dictatorship the military leaders decided to ban the letter "y" for absolutely no reason at all except to show they could. He also felt that this letter "Americanized" his name in case he ever decided to move to the United States.





BEER, POLITICS, AND A LATE NIGHT CAR RIDE FROM HELL IN DROUGHT- PLAGUED BRAZIL.

By Nick Arons

I was tardy for my appointment with Jaymes, arriving an hour late at the party offices. I told an office boy that Jaymes and I had agreed to meet at five-thirty, and he just laughed, saying Jaymes would be there soon. He told me to have a beer and wait, so I did; four beers and three hours later Jaymes showed up with a car full of hats emblazoned with revolutionary slogans such as "Down with the IMF [International Monetary Fund]."

"Let's go," he said. We got into the car and drove around the city listening to Cuban music (he had just been there as a delegate for the Workers' Party) until we found the little store that made the T-shirts he was to take to Quixadá. He had forgotten the money to pay the shirt manufacturers, so he squirmed a bit, told some jokes, and then ran for the car—T-shirts in hand—and took off, hitting a pothole, cursing some, and smirking while I arranged a thousand T-shirts in the backseat. "Fasten your seat belt!" he yelled in English, quoting a soap opera he liked. "Dees is dee ride of your life." We sped off into the night, heading for the interior.

The plan was to drop off the shirts and hats, look around the town, and return the next day to Fortaleza. We went to sleep at his brother's house at three in the morning, where we were to sleep in hammocks, which was fine because I could have slept standing.

The brother was away. In fact, he was never home. The next morning his wife told us that he was lucky if he spent two months out of the year at home. He was off fighting drought, she proudly reported, which meant that he was digging a reservoir, building a road, or planting drought-resistant crops several municipalities away. Their home was built out of bricks and mud, with gaping holes through which wind whistled and rain trickled. The house had no door, but instead a brown sheet, and was really one large room subdivided into smaller rooms by yet more sheets. The walls were mostly bare, covered occasionally with framed pictures. Some were of family events—a wedding, a baptism.

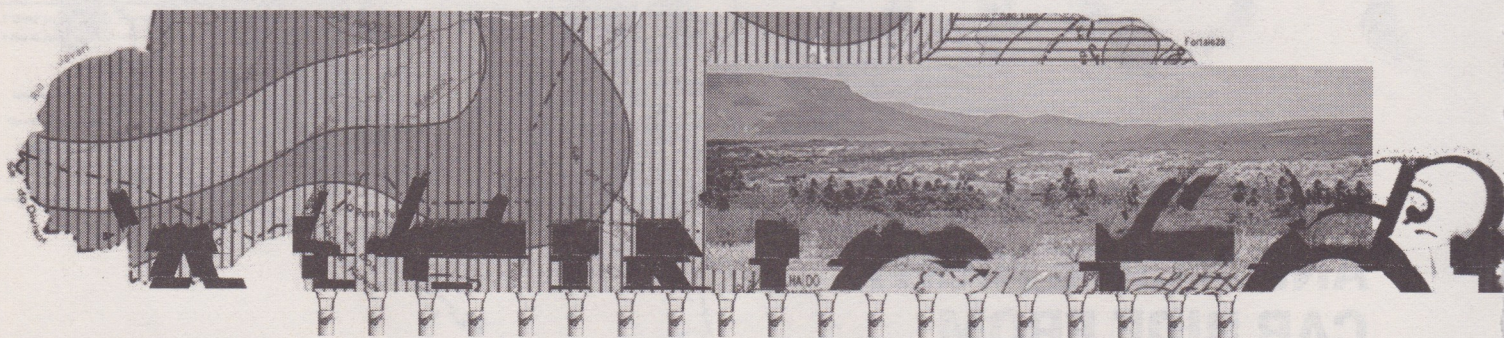
Upon closer inspection, I noticed that Jaymes's sister-in-law

temperature in the room was easily higher than 100 degrees; we all were sweating profusely, and I was wishing for the end of the speech. But every time the bearded man said "in conclusion," he would talk for another 10 minutes, repeating what he had already said. Every time he repeated himself, he would shout louder, but the people in the audience stared with the same riveted attention, which told me they really were not listening at all. More annoying, every time he started to shout louder about politics, the room seemed to get hotter, and I tried to peel away more layers of clothing. I felt dirty, having not showered in days, but the people there were dirtier than I, having just finished work in the fields. So I calmed down and tried to pay attention to the angry man.

Jaymes could not have been happier. He was doing good business. In the intermission and during excruciatingly long monologues, men and women approached, handshakes and friendly conversation were traded, money changed hands, and revolutionary hats and shirts were on their way to another convention. Jaymes would be a millionaire one day, I was certain.

From the sauna of the convention, we went to his friend Oclesiano's house because we "had to have a beer with Oclesiano." Then Jaymes took me to the Cedar Reservoir, which was beautiful, albeit completely dry. There was no drought when I was in Quixadá, yet the reservoir was empty. I shuddered to imagine what it looked like during a drought. We drove into the mountains to a church overlooking a sprawling valley and had another beer. We got dirty looks from the people entering the church, but this was Brazil, where you can drink a beer next to a church and people do not get overly upset.

We saw the spot where the concentration camps for drought refugees sat in 1915, and we visited the location that Rachel de Queiroz observed during the drought of 1915, which she immortalized in her novel *O quinze*, a book of dreams, torture, drought, devastation, feminism, famine, racial awareness, and government cruel-



had cut out photographs from calendars and framed them. They were lovely, though it made me sad to think about the effort that went into saving the money to buy the frames. Otherwise, the home had very few amenities: a propane-powered stove, a latrine out back, and a small yard with a few chickens, one of which was to be our meal the next day.

Jaymes had woken me at 8:00 that morning, saying we had to drop off the hats and shirts. So we went to the Workers' Party convention, and Jaymes decided to sit and listen to the speeches, which consisted of several middle-class white men complaining that too many middle-class white men ran the country. The

ty. She was 19 when she wrote the book, which reminds the reader of the beauty of the sertão and of the kindness of those who live there. It tells of a father who is too proud to beg for food and whose son eats a poison root out of hunger and dies. It speaks of a region where life is so precarious that families often split up forever, simply so they can survive. The horizon de Queiroz depicts is gray, and the air is colored red. Life is literally sucked out of cattle: "the cows dried up as if a parasite within them was absorbing their blood and devouring their muscles, leaving only the hard exterior of bones and a miserable body of rusted copper and dirt." The 1915 drought killed approximately 72,000, 27,000 from the state of Ceará alone. An

additional 75,000 emigrated to the Amazon in that year alone.

The day was getting older, and I began to realize that we were not leaving Saturday night, as Jaymes had promised, which worried me because I had made plans with a friend for Sunday. At 10:00, I finally asked Jaymes if we were leaving that night, and of course he said no. We had been invited to a party.

We drank more beers and headed to the party at a nearby bar. It was Arab Night, which meant people were dressed like queens, sheiks, nomadic shepherds, prophets, Bedouins, and Moses. The cover charge was one real (50 US cents). The patrons looked nothing like Middle Eastern nomads, holy men, or belly dancers, but the party was fun. Jaymes told me I should find a woman to kiss; when I told him I didn't think so, he replied, "It's easy, friend. You just pick one and kiss her. You will see what I mean."

I was not sure exactly what he meant, but when the party was starting to wind down, I found myself at the back of the bar cum mosque, surrounded by couples sticking their tongues down each other's throats. Everywhere I turned to walk, I ran into another couple going at it. I was the only one not kissing someone, so I stood there in the middle of a sea of lovers and smiled to myself. I was on the way out when I struck up a conversation with the bartender. I told him I was interested in drought, and he told me that Rachel de Queiroz was at her fazenda that very night, in Quixadá. I was quite surprised because she was very old and rarely left Rio de Janeiro.

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"Yes, very sure," he replied. "I will show you where she lives."

"Now?" I asked.

"Yes, why not; it is close to here."

So he finished his duties and got off early, telling his boss that an American needed his help with some research. At 2:00 in the morning, we walked through Quixadá, past drunk men weaving and waving and talking, an old man sleeping on the street, scores of wandering mutts, itinerant kittens, geese, chickens, and ducks, and several

"I should tell you," my new friend Samuel said, "that I am the groundskeeper of her fazenda, and I live in the shack beside her home."

Now things were starting to make sense, though I could not figure out what I would do there at this ungodly hour of the night, considering that I had hoped to meet de Queiroz in Rio and interview her. He had told me that it was a short walk, but we had been stumbling along the road now for at least 20 minutes. Nonetheless, we walked some more until we came to a tall fence, behind which, according to Samuel, was de Queiroz's home.

"I climb over the fence instead of going through the gate," he said, "since Rachel prefers that."

"Oh really," I said. "Interesting, very interesting."

We climbed over the fence, which was not very difficult to scale, and I found myself staring at the most famous fazenda in northeast Brazil. It was here that de Queiroz watched drought after drought unfold until, at the age of 19, she wrote the novel that made her famous. She then went on to join the Communist Party, for which she was arrested in 1937, and to write hundreds of short stories and newspaper articles and dozens of novels about life in northeast Brazil.

Samuel led me through the front door and said, "Let me first show you her room. But be very quiet, we cannot wake anyone up. They would kill me if they knew I brought you here since she rarely lets people inside. Especially foreigners."

We walked through a long hallway full of photographs and flowers until we got to her bedroom. He pushed the door slightly ajar and pointed to a frail woman sleeping in a hammock. "There she is," he said, "Rachel de Queiroz."

I looked in for a second and immediately knew it was she because I had seen recent photographs of her, and then I pulled back, feeling enormous guilt, as if I were a stalker (I believe I actually was).

"OK, thanks," I said, suddenly nervous, "that was really something else, but I think I should go home now." But Samuel wanted

WE SAW THE SPOT WHERE THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS FOR DROUGHT REFUGEES SAT IN 1915, AND WE VISITED THE LOCATION THAT RACHEL DE QUEIROZ OBSERVED DURING THE DROUGHT OF 1915, WHICH SHE IMMORTALIZED IN HER NOVEL *O QUINZE*, A BOOK OF DREAMS, TORTURE, DROUGHT, DEVASTATION, FEMINISM, FAMINE, RACIAL AWARENESS, AND GOVERNMENT CRUELTY.

teenagers kissing each other furtively under mango and orange trees. We walked and walked, leaving the city center and arriving at an orange dirt road leading out of the city.

"It is this way," he said. "Follow me."

I was getting a bit suspicious of this too-genial man and asked if he was sure now was the best time to go to her home. At this point, I should probably mention that I had already consumed several beers. I should also mention that Jaymes and I had smoked some funny green stuff at the back of the Arab Night party in order to appreciate our surroundings more fully, so I was also seeing several trees where there should have been only one. Let us say that the sertão looked very different that evening.

to show me the rest of the house. He took me through several more rooms, told me who had slept where and when, and recounted some funny stories about presidents, senators, and dictators who had walked down these halls. It was like a formal guided tour, except it was taking place at 3:00 in the morning and he was talking in whispers. The moon poured through large windows, making eerie shapes on chairs, tables, and tiled floors. He finally led me out into the garden and showed me where she read and where she wrote.

Samuel wanted to walk me home, saying he feared I would get lost or mugged, but I insisted that I would be fine. He drifted off into the night, heading toward his shack next to the author's home. I sat in a hammock hanging between two trees and stared at the moon and de

Queiroz's home, feeling guilty that I had just stared at a 90-something-year-old sleeping woman. I was also uncomfortable because I was still on her property. I started thinking about her novel and what it must have been like to watch such horrific events. I felt for the little girl who watched people die of thirst, who lived only kilometers from a concentration camp, and who lived in a society where a nice, smart girl like her should be worried only about whom she would marry. I was looking forward to awaking early the next morning so I could come back and ask for an interview. Samuel had said he would tell her about me, though he made me promise I would not tell about our late-night visit. It was just amazing to sit there, and I wondered what the little girl would have thought in 1930 if someone told her that 70 years later an American would be lying in her hammock at three in the morning just so he could soak up some of the magic of her presence.

The problem with these thoughts, coupled with a cool evening breeze and comfortable hammock, is that they put me to sleep. Fortunately, the rooster crowed early, and I awoke with a start to hear de Queiroz's maid singing in the kitchen. I realized I had not yet been spotted. I jumped to my feet, head spinning and hurting, and sprinted to the fence. I leaped like an Olympic high jumper and made it over with two incredible surges and strides. I stopped for a moment to marvel at my own physical ability and elasticity.

Just as I was coming over the other side to the safety and freedom of the road, however, my shoe slipped off onto her side of the fence. I also made a yelping sound when I snagged my shorts on the barbed wire. The maid looked my way. She started running toward the fence, which fortunately had enough weeds on it to shield me from sight as I ran off into the rising sun.

I made it back to Jaymes's brother's home before they awoke, so I jumped into my hammock and implored the heavens that the maid had not seen me. I sat there praying for two hours, drinking water as fast as it would boil to ease my headache, and then made coffee for Jaymes. He woke up shortly thereafter, looked up, and said, "Nicolás, I knew you were going to get lucky last night. Which one was she, the Cleopatra? I saw her giving you the eye. Or was it the masked gypsy woman? Man, she looked real good, didn't she? You lucky dog."

I am not sure why, but I blurted out, "I slept at Rachel de Queiroz's home."

"You dirty bastard," he said, laughing because he thought it was a joke.

For the next hour, Jaymes prodded me, trying to figure out whom I had been with. I denied everything until he gave up. I told him I had an errand to run.

"I have to make a phone call," I lied.

"Sure, I will take you there."

"No thanks, I think I will go alone."

"But you have no idea where the phone is."

"Yes, I do."

"Where is it, then?"

"Uhh, I have to buy some things for friends in Fortaleza."

"The stores are all closed on Sunday."

"I have to buy some water for my hangover."

"We have water here."

"Jaymes! Listen, man, I have to go to Rachel de Queiroz's home to try to interview her and, god willing, get my shoe back! OK, man, I had a rough morning."

"Americans are strange."

I walked back to de Queiroz's house, following the trail from the previous evening. The whole night had been unreal, almost dreamlike, but I was missing a shoe, which proved it had taken place. I walked up to the gate this time and rang the little bell. It did not work, so I did what everyone does: clap loudly and shout, "Oi, moça!"

De Queiroz, or at least I thought it was she, came to the fence to answer it.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I would like to talk to you, if you do not mind, about your work, life, and memories of drought. I am an American researcher, trying to understand the literature of the drought. I am sorry to just drop in like this, without warning, but I heard you were home and would love just a few minutes of your time."

"You must want Rachel," she said. "She has left for Rio already."

I knew it was she, but I asked anyway, "Who are you?"

"I am the maid," she replied.

I played along, saying back, "Well, would you ask Rachel de Queiroz if I could interview her, please?"

"She left for Rio," Rachel answered back.

"Can I please interview you?" I pleaded. "I know you are Rachel de Queiroz."

"Listen," she said, "I do not know what a maid has to say about the drought, and as I told you before, she has left for Rio."

"Sure thing then, thanks for your help. Do you think that I might submit to Rachel something in writing, which she could consider? I could explain who I am, what I am interested in, and what I want to ask her about."

"Yes," Rachel replied, "why don't you try that?"

"Should I send it to this address?"

"No, let me get you her address in Rio, where she spends most of her time," and she walked into the house, then returned a few moments later and handed me a piece of paper with an address and fax number.

"Thanks for your help, and sorry to bother you. By the way, can I have a word with Samuel?" I asked before leaving.

"Who?"

"Samuel, the man who lives in that shack."

"That shack is empty except for the chickens."

"You do not know Samuel, the guy who takes care of the grounds?"

"Junior does that," she said, pointing to an old man on his knees picking weeds with his bare hands, like the poor laborers in de Queiroz's novels. "There is no one named Samuel here, boy."

"Are you sure you do not know a Samuel?"

"I have to get back to work now, thanks for stopping by."

I turned away, completely bemused.

I had walked a few paces when she called after me. I looked up, thinking I had passed some hidden test of hers and now she would talk to me.

"Boy," she said, "you forgot your shoe," and she passed my running sneaker through a hole in the barbed wire.

"Be careful, child," she said. "Always be careful."
And she walked away like a queen.

Soon after I returned to the brother's home, it looked like rain. Jaymes's sister-in-law was there with several women who were assisting with lunch preparations. Everyone in the house had been smiling and getting high on anticipation when they smelled rain. As soon as the thunder sounded, the women went into action. I counted eight buckets catching water coming down from the roof, and two women running around madly; previously docile women with stoic faces were now sprinting around everywhere to catch water. The house had a complex drainage system, with the roof pipe leading to one pipe leading to another. Then the water bounced off a wall, ricocheted off a tree and into one bucket, and the same happened in several other places. It was amazing—women running with buckets, taking advantage of the rain—and me just sitting and marveling at the spectacle.

Kids rolled around in the mud and wrestled; a drunk man was so happy he started frolicking in the mud, covering himself with it until his wife came to fetch him. Another man came to the house to discuss the rain after it stopped, and soon a debate started. I swear they talked about it for an hour: How much had fallen, did they keep enough, what sort of rain was it, and should they drink some beer to celebrate the rain? We sloshed through the mud to a neighbor's home, where Jaymes's girlfriend from the previous night lived. He wanted to kiss her good-bye, but she would have none of it. The television was blaring with Domingão do Faustão (Huge Sunday of Faustão), a portly man who holds singing contests for youths, dances with well-endowed women, performs magic shows, and warms up the television audience for Xuxa (a popular blond ignoramus).

Boys were drinking cachaça while outside the rain smacked the roofs of huts and turned the dirt road into a mud bath. Every

**IF I FOUND THE RIGHT PLACE WHERE
EVERYONE WAS YELLING AT ONCE, IT NO
LONGER SOUNDED LIKE CHAOS, BUT A
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AND EVERYTHING IN A RHYTHM THAT
NEVER STOPPED POUNDING.**



so often a boy would sneak off to the back of the house to vomit, pretending that nothing had occurred, and then come back for some more rum. Jaymes and I stayed for a while, tasted some of their cachaça, then jumped into the car before we too had to join them at the rear of the house. We left quickly because Jaymes had just insulted his girlfriend for refusing to kiss him good-bye. God could not have protected us from her cachaça-inebriated brother and his adolescent buddies had they found out that she had been mistreated by an underweight, crazy T-shirt salesman driving a

car with four different-size wheels.

We struck off for Fortaleza immediately, passing through muddy roads, spinning and hydroplaning out of control several times, and listening to music so loud that my hearing was permanently impaired. I was in a complete daze: I had screwed up my chances for an interview with de Queiroz, had hardly slept a wink, and had seen the interior of northeast Brazil in all its naked debauchery, horror, beauty, kindness, sympathy, depression, and glory.

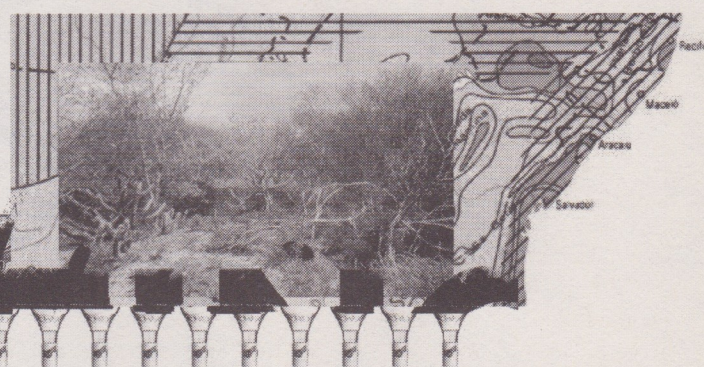
Jaymes asked what I was doing in Brazil, and I told him that my research so far consisted of visiting writers to ask about droughts, reading the important pantheon of northeastern writers, watching movies about drought, and talking to people about their own experiences in the drought-stricken interior.

"Oh," he replied, "I thought you were researching something else."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Don't worry about it."

I wanted to tell Jaymes how interesting my research had been so far, but I was too tired. People were incredibly helpful, I wanted to tell him, and I had a huge stack of books that students had given me to read, CDs with drought lyrics, poems with drought metaphors, and stories about their families. If I just walked to the market, I met people from the interior who enjoyed telling me about the droughts, and all over the market I sometimes stopped and just looked at the chaos around me, the people hawking women's underwear, street vendors trying to sell me stereos or live chickens, cars driving around with huge speakers blaring political slogans or telling us of the sale at some store. I would look into doorways that led to rooms full of women sewing shirts or men drinking cachaça in the middle of the day or children playing soccer or a mother yelling orders at her kids. If I found the right place where everyone was yelling at once, it no longer sounded like chaos, but a symphony that sustained everyone and everything in a rhythm



that never stopped pounding. I could walk to the square where an Andean flutist played and people circled around, or a poet recited verses from memory because he was illiterate, or a priest told us that we were all living in sin and heaven could be found in his church.

I wanted to tell it all to Jaymes, but I was just too tired, and as we reentered Fortaleza, I realized that I had not gotten out of drinking cachaça after all. ©

Excerpted from *Waiting for Rain* by Nick Arons, UA Press, 2004.

Safe Tonight?





How a new concept in social work is helping kids make better decisions about sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll.

By Abbie Jarman
Illustration by Caitlin Kuhwald

When girls walk into the Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP) they are stunned. Not stunned that there is an organization to help females in the sex trade, but stunned that they are greeted with respect. They aren't confronted with feelings of guilt, victimization, and helplessness. They are not judged for doing what they do, they aren't ordered to stop. In fact they don't even have to give their names.

These are key tenets of the harm-reduction philosophy, the unique approach to social service work practiced by YWEP, a three-year-old Chicago-based nonprofit. The staff members—most of whom are former sex workers—are not trying to act as saviors, they want to help clients solve the problems they face each day. They're giving sex workers the tools they need to protect themselves in the trade, as well as a sense of comfort and companionship.

According to YWEP's Director Claudine O'Leary, "So much of harm reduction is about people within the community itself reaching out to one another." It's an unusual task for the girls who use the YWEP, since girls in the sex trade typically don't get along. But inside the YWEP, girls realize they are not each other's enemies; in fact they all benefit if they help each other out.

There are no strict rules for following a harm-reduction model. Organizations like the YWEP are built on the understanding that the sex trade is here to stay. So they designed an organization that provides a wide variety of services to fit the needs of women who work in the sex industry. According to the harm-reduction model, the best way to help sex workers is to give them the education and resources to reduce their risks in a neutral, nonjudgmental way.

Despite the fact that the YWEP has only one paid staff member and three volunteers, they manage to reach more than 1000 young women every year with important services: safer sex education, legal rights, and financial management. The key to the YWEP's success is their peer counselor-training program, in which clients learn to provide harm-reduction support in their communities. In addition, the staff invites clients to weekly meetings to discuss how they can improve the program and the services they provide.

"In Chicago, the sex trade is mostly off the streets, so we can't just go out and find these girls," says O'Leary. "The outreach workers have to go to homes and shelters and privately bring it up with girls inside. They hang around in the bathrooms of strip clubs, or find the one apartment in town where everyone crashes

when they need to. "You need to know where they are, be friends with them," said O'Leary, "something only their peers can do."

O'Leary explains that young women will not turn to organizations geared at adults for support. "Most of the girls simply won't put up with being lectured by a middle-aged social worker who's never turned a trick in her life. Besides, they are making \$1000 a night, partying and exploring and, most of all, feeling a sense of power—something they don't have anywhere else in their lives."

O'Leary knows that, "Young people need to feel that they are effective. When they are locked up, they are made to feel like they can't do anything, they aren't members of society. But when they come in here, they can contribute." At the YWEP, clients contribute by helping to hire volunteers and plan the program's budget. Working together has made it possible to create a supportive and open environment.

This peer support is a vital component of the harm-reduction model; no one can understand the unique problems faced by high-risk communities everyday unless they've experienced similar choices. In the rave scene, for example, organizations like DanceSafe are popping up to help with peer-education programs focusing on how to safely identify and use drugs.

When he started college, DanceSafe Executive Director Marc Brandl was disturbed by the number of people using drugs without knowing a thing about them. "It's a dangerous formula not only for the health of the individual user, but for the scene. It opens the door wide to attacks from society and law enforcement on a totally youth-driven movement like the rave scene in the 1990s."

Started by people within the rave community, DanceSafe gives unbiased information about drug use and drug identification. Their website offers information and order forms for drug-adulterant screening kits, illustrated charts on how to identify different kinds of ecstasy, and tips on safe injection.

One feature of the harm-reduction model is the ability to meet clients on their own turf. Like the YWEP girls infiltrating strip clubs, DanceSafe volunteers set up tables at raves with brochures, ear plugs, and pill-testing kits to better know what's in the drugs floating around the party. They help out with medical emergencies and watch for anyone that gets into any sort of trouble.

Lately, DanceSafe has moved beyond the rave scene and into communities where drug misuse is a threat. The San Francisco chapter recently tabled at the "Reggae on the River" festival, and the New Mexico chapter has conducted seminars with middle and high school educators and students on low-risk drug use. Meanwhile Brandl is working on collaborating with larger institutions like YMCAs and college campus health clinics.

For Brandl, harm reduction provides clear, impartial information about potentially dangerous issues. He believes that harm reduction is a particularly effective way to help the whole community because it helps to nip the worst potential dangers in the bud. Organizations like DanceSafe and the YWEP "bring a 'solutionist' point of view to areas that are generally dominated by moralistic and legalistic points of view," he says, "because what you don't know can hurt you."

While harm-reduction groups have made a lot of headway in reducing the number of risks troubling high-risk communities,

they still have long, hard roads ahead. Brandl knows this better than anyone. "The drug war spends billions every year trying to scare people into not using drugs, and still we have millions of young people every year ignoring all that and using drugs anyway—and most of them will never develop an abusive relationship with drugs. Those are the people we try to reach at events and through our website."

DanceSafe has also felt opposition from rave promoters, who fear the organization's presence at their parties will draw unwanted attention from the police. Other opponents to the widely debated model perceive a less concrete threat. "I think harm reduction approach is good for some people, but can let others fall into the trap that society has given up on the possibility of recovery," said Jeff Epperly, head of the New Hope Recovery Center in Chicago, which follows the radically different 12-step treatment model.

But DanceSafe has gotten nothing but support from people within the dance community. Even local governments have reached out to DanceSafe and invited them to talk with public health officials. But largely, the organization sticks to the streets, avoiding politics unless politics are imposed upon it. This is where its parent organization, the Harm Reduction Coalition (HRC), steps in.

HRC trains people on harm reduction outreach, advocates for helpful policies, and acts as a nationwide clearinghouse for both literature and links. It publishes a profusion of pamphlets on safer sex and drug use, newsletters on trends in the movement, and studies on harm reduction. HRC also holds the biannual Harm Reduction Conference, where Harm Reduction practitioners from around the country convene to talk and strategize about furthering the movement. This year in New Orleans, the fifth conference will problem-solve on topics like viral hepatitis, mental health and drug use, and methamphetamine.

"Every year, as the results prove that harm reduction saves lives, more people are coming around, in society and in government," said HRC's New York head of training Adrienne Brown. "But of course then you get the backlash, like the scare-tactic, anti-drug commercials and lockdown on harm-reduction funding. The more success, the more beef the government has with our work."

Despite the constant criticism, Brown has seen big changes in harm reduction philosophy and care from her bird's-eye view at the HRC. "It's systemizing, integrating into the care systems. It used to be much more grassroots back-door, life-saving dramatic tactics—illegal needle exchanges—where the costs were high. Now there's a focus on self-care and what can be shifted in the relationship between user and social worker."

Studies say that 36 percent of all HIV infections can be attributed to injection drug use, yet access to clean needles has been one of the largest challenges to safer use to both drug users and harm-reduction advocates. But after a decade's worth of studies from institutions like the Centers for Disease Control concluded that needle-exchange programs have reduced the HIV infection rate greatly (30 percent in 1997) while showing no increase of drug use, needle-exchange programs have grown in credibility and accessibility.

One such needle-exchange group formed in New York City in 1993—a group of current or one-time drug users, sex-trade

workers, homeless people, people with HIV/AIDS, and people with mental illness. A little over 10 years later, the New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE) is getting local, state, and federal aid, and serving 150,000 clients a year as the largest needle exchange in the city.

Yet these figures don't tell the stories of the clients helped by harm-reduction programs. One such client, Dimitri (last name withheld), eased his drug addiction with ibogaine, an illegal hallucinogenic that brings the drug user out virtually withdrawal-free. "What really helped with needle exchange and harm reduction is that it kept me alive until I was ready to deal with it," Dimitri explained.

Like YWEP and DanceSafe, NYHRE takes its team of volunteers and boxes of condoms, needles, and brochures to ground level. They have six street-side locations in drug-heavy areas that they hit regularly. The volunteers set up tents and offer harm reduction education, "sidewalk psychotherapy," legal assistance, and guidance for people with or at risk of AIDS. NYHRE also organized a program called Gallery to Galleries— a traveling group of active drug users who go to museums, theaters, and concerts—in order to explore the huge world they are invited to join and appreciate.

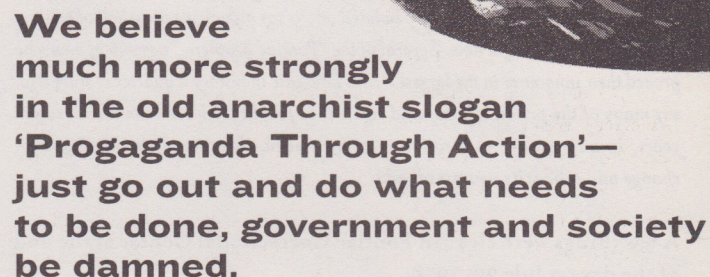
NYHRE Executive Director Terry Ruefli was a powerful advocate for AIDS prevention and outreach well before he joined the organization, and he's seen harm reduction evolve with time. He explained that harm-reduction methods used to allow users to be treated like they were special, they were always right, and they needed to be given whatever they wanted. Now, however, Ruefli says, "Everybody has a responsibility, including drug users . . . Users are like everyone else—they need limits. That you respect and care for them but there are limits in terms of how we can care for them. We try to teach them to be good citizens and to respect the police and who they live next to."

Brandl and DanceSafe couldn't agree more. "We believe much more strongly in the old anarchist slogan 'Protaganda Through Action'—just go out and do what needs to be done, government and society be damned. What is better for the individual ecstasy user: prison or using ecstasy? If a group going to a party gets stopped by the police and caught with drugs—is it better for their mental and physical well being to go to prison or to go to a party and use the drugs?"

"We disagree with a moralistic view of drug use as either good or bad," Brandl continued. "Drugs are inanimate objects. How you will interact with the drug on a particular day in a particular environment will vary greatly."

And by giving drug users responsibility for their lives, users can't blame drugs either. "You cannot tell me, 'I sold my kid's coat to buy crack cocaine,'" YWEP's O'Leary agrees. "No, you sold your kid's coat because you're an asshole. Don't blame the crack."

Anyway, traditional law enforcement methods of enforcing ever-stricter penalties against users hasn't exactly eliminated the drug trade. In fact, Ruefli argues, "All the data says it doesn't work. It's far better to work with the drug users. Most drug users use for a reason: they are victims of abuse, domestic violence, whatever. There is a reason, and if you work with them to get to the point, they will usually stop."



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Harm reduction emphasizes that people need to be in control of their own lives in order to effectively change them, something traditional drug prevention doesn't allow. "Most people, if given half the chance, will give up drugs," said Ruefli. "Our job is to help people meet those needs that are driving their drug use, so they can stop. A job, a place to stay, whatever it may be."

This concept of choice and control makes figuring out *why* someone uses drugs or joins the sex trade all the more difficult. Some social workers victimize users, claiming they were forced into it by social, economic, or racial restraints. Others are quick to demonize them, saying they have done it to themselves.

But while psychologists, sociologists and police officers rack their brains over it, harm reduction hardly takes into account "why people use drugs." Sure, practitioners consider the immediate contributing factors—like unemployment or homelessness or getting kicked out of school. But the bottom line is what the user identifies is going on in his or her life. What anyone else thinks does not alter what information or guidance the user gets.

This situation is mirrored in views of the sex trades. "Some girls think they are victims," explained O'Leary. "Some whose parents put them on the street at five years old will say at age 15 that she is doing it by choice and that she is not a victim. If she comes back at age 20 and says she was a victim, that should not change how you treated them at age 15."

Both force and choice can exist at the same time, and harm reduction refuses to polarize the issue into two sides: force and choice, abstinence and abuse, social worker and user. No two peoples' situations are the same. "No single solution will work," says O'Leary, "and nothing will work until individuals are given the information and power to figure it out themselves." Luckily, informational resources are becoming more and more abundant. And once the clients of harm-reduction services help themselves, they can begin to pass on useful information, and help more people improve their lives in whatever manner they best decide. ©

Today the US prison population is the largest it has ever been, with over two million people behind bars—a disproportionate number of them African-American men. With the increasing use of private prisons and continuing overcrowding in state prisons, conditions keep getting worse in many facilities, according to prisoners and prison reform advocacy groups. With prison populations strongly divided along gang lines and the most modern and expensive technology used to keep prisons secure and prisoners isolated, many say organizing on behalf of prisoners is at a low point right now. Several of the “Pontiac Brothers,” a group of men who proved their innocence in the largest Death Row case in history a quarter century ago, say many of the prison reforms and rights they fought for have been lost in recent years. In a time when inspiration is sorely needed, their story provides hope for change and solidarity against all odds.

A few things were clear in Pontiac Correctional Center at the end of the day on July 22, 1978.

For one thing, the inmates weren't going to take it anymore: not the lack of fans in the sweltering heat of a central Illinois summer; not the massive overcrowding, with about over 2,000 men in a century-old building designed for 700; not the arbitrary treatment and racist behavior by the mostly white guards; not the lack of medical care or the low quality food.

The other thing that was clear was that three guards were dead.

What wasn't clear, after a massive rebellion swept the institution, is who killed the guards. “There was no way to know,” Ben-neth Lee, a Pontiac inmate at the time, says. “It was just chaos.”

The killings were a public relations disaster for the prison. Coming seven years after the nation was shaken by the prison rebellion at Attica in New York, the similarities between the two incidents were striking. At Attica, 1,300 inmates took 40 guards hostage for a week, demanding better living conditions, education, and job training. The National Guard and state police seized the institution, killing 43 people including inmates and guards, in the process. In Pontiac too, guards had lost control of the institution. The prisoners had risen up. And now the hunt for scapegoats was on.

Shortly after order was restored in Pontiac, the administration placed the institution on complete lockdown. Guards and officials began making their way through the cells, conducting interrogations rife with torture and intimidation. Anyone could have been implicated, so inmates rushed to implicate others first. Accusations flew.

“The state was playing inmates against each other,” notes attorney Larry Kennon. “If they tell you you'll only get five years instead of 50, you'll tell them your own mother did it. The state was not about justice, they were about getting people convicted.”

“Everybody felt like a suspect,” says Lee. “The paranoia was terrible. Everybody was under pressure to tell on somebody else. Even after we were arrested we didn't know if we could trust each other.”

Initially, 29 men were arrested for the murders of the guards. “There were only three dead, how could 29 people have murdered them?” asks Robert Harris, another former Pontiac inmate. “They said they were stabbed, kicked, hit, killed multiple times each. The lockdown conditions were so harsh that people would say whatever they had to to get out of those conditions. We had no lights, no showers, we were afraid to eat the food. For the first week we didn't eat. It was a nightmare.”

Some of the men arrested were highly visible prisoners, trou-

blemakers prone to complaining about the horrendous conditions in the prison. Most of them were high-ups in one of the three gangs that dominated the prison.

“Clearly we were indicted because we had influence in the street organizations,” says Lee.

A Rebellion

The administration tried to portray the uprising as an orchestrated effort by the gangs. They used the media to rally public hysteria about dangerous Chicago street gangs controlling the corridors of the Pontiac prison.

Inmates describe a totally different situation. The uprising was spontaneous, they say, and in that sense very organically political. “The [human rights and other] violations are what caused the prison to explode,” explains attorney Stanley Hill, who worked on the case. “If you treat people like human beings, they won't do that. But they were being treated like animals. Prisons all over the country were erupting for the same reason. With Attica, Angela Davis, Soledad—they were saying, ‘Just because we're prisoners doesn't mean we're not human.’”

The Pontiac Brothers, as the arrested inmates came to be known, note that the administration and local and state government officials had plenty of warning that some sort of demonstration was bound to happen. The state government had issued reports about the severe overcrowding in the prison, and inmates had filed numerous petitions with the administration complaining about conditions.

“That kind of overcrowding breeds a lot of contempt; all those bodies in one space is a hell of a psychological thing,” says Harris. “They deliberately create the type of environments that lead to riots and insurrections.”

Building a Movement

If the administration feared political organizing by prisoners to take over the prison before the riot, their actions after the mayhem turned that fear into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Out of the violence and chaos that roiled Pontiac on July 22 rose a phoenix of cooperation, unity, determination, and carefully planned strategy and action. Divergent forces came together to fight the unjust and arbitrary murder charges leveled against the men, and by extension the horrible conditions that had led to the uprising in the first place. The accused inmates, members of three different gangs with plenty of personal hostilities between them, realized that the best way for them to avoid execution would be to work together. Their families and friends on the outside also joined forces, overcoming divisions in the process themselves, and rallied their communities around the issue. Lawyers who didn't usually find themselves allied also joined forces: Radical, largely white lawyers accustomed to taking on politically-charged cases and framing them in the context of larger struggles against imperialism and oppression joined forces with community-oriented black lawyers who normally worked more to get their clients out of the system than to prove abstract political points.

“There was a real effort to get progressive lawyers on the case,” explains Michael Deutsch, a lawyer with the People's Law Office, a firm that has long represented clients pro bono in cases



MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Twenty years
after the Pontiac
Brothers fought
the system to stay
alive, their case
still resonates.

By Kari Lydersen

involving political persecution and police brutality. "For a regular lawyer, the idea is just to do whatever you have to do for your case. We thought the defense had to be unified. If everyone cooperates, you don't have to worry about the next guy becoming a snitch. We also believed in the importance of the involvement and leadership role of African-American lawyers in the case. At first there was resistance to the concept of working collectively. We'd get criticism from some of the lawyers that 'You're just interested in politics, you're not interested in the individual guys.' But over time people realized it was in our best interest to stick together."

The Trial Begins

The defense team's first challenge was to obtain a change of venue from Livingston County—which includes Pontiac, where almost everyone works at the prison or is related to someone who does—to Chicago. "Chicago was the city of our peers, not some small town," explains Lee. "The judge we were originally assigned to had refused to marry an inter-racial couple. We knew we didn't want him." The petition for a change of venue succeeded.

The Brothers, who had been moved from Pontiac and housed at Stateville Correctional Center after their indictments, were transferred to Cook County Jail during the trial. There, they moved their newfound organization in other directions, addressing conditions in the jail. At the time there were no pay phones on the tiers, and they successfully worked with other inmates to demand phones on each tier.

In Chicago, the battle for public opinion, running parallel to the battle in the courts, continued. The Pontiac Brothers and their outside supporters snapped into action, producing fliers, pamphlets, and other media about the case. They utilized already existing Black Nationalist networks and other outlets for the black community, including many stories published in the militant paper *Arm the Spirit*.

Out of the original 29 arrests, some charges were dropped and some reduced. But 17 men were indicted for multiple counts of murder, attempted murder, and mob action, and the prosecutor was seeking the death penalty against them. The trials were split up into groups of 10 and seven, with the group of 10 being tried first. Notorious gang leader Larry Hoover was in the group of seven.

"They figured nothing could happen in the penitentiary without Larry," notes Hill, whose office is now decorated with a courtroom artist's drawings of him during the case.

After five months of jury selection, the trial began. "Our main defense was that we would never really know who did it, given the sor-

did array of witnesses they provided," says Hill. "We found out the witnesses they were calling had been given drugs and things. Whoever could make the best deal, whoever could jump on the bus quickest, were the ones the state wanted. The real guys responsible got off."

They also showed how prison conditions had led to the riot. "At Attica [the inmates] articulated their position clearly, and it was seen as a political rebellion, whereas Pontiac was seen as a riot," says Deutsch. "Our view was that Pontiac was a political rebellion too. Our idea was to put the state on trial, to expose their use of punishment and rewards to gain witnesses."

Along with fighting for the acquittal of the Brothers, they were fighting against the prison conditions that had actually worsened since the uprising thanks to the lockdown of prisoners and the various ways guards tried to get retribution.

"The conditions were horrendous," remembers Hill. "The guards were pissed off because their buddies were dead, and so people's rights were violated as a result."

Taking the Law Into Their Hands


Many of the lawyers and volunteer legal aids who came to town specifically to help on the case worked around the clock for little pay. "We had to give up our own practices, and none of us got paid [enough] for all the work we did," notes Kennon.

Hill describes how he "got pulled into it as a reluctant warrior." "I didn't really want to do it, I had started with a firm doing transactional work and I was finally making a few dollars; I didn't really want to get into death penalty work," says Hill. "But I knew [defendant] Kevin Tulbert and his family from a juvenile case, I knew his parents, 'Mr. And Mrs. T,' and his little brother."

"We were all young lawyers," he remembers. "Trying the biggest capital punishment case in history. It was exciting and it was scary. It was an awesome responsibility."

Meanwhile, along with the tireless efforts of many lawyers, the Brothers ultimately had to take a lot of responsibility for their own defenses. Some of the lawyers originally appointed to the case proved unwilling or incapable of putting in the vast amounts of effort needed, and some didn't agree with the unified approach the group was taking.

Lee describes pouring over law books in the prison's meager library, learning about the whole legal process and studying cases that would relate to their situation. He became a teacher and advocate for others as well. "The tier was our law school," he says. "If I found something that would help someone else, I would show it to them. We



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The prosecution worked hard to foster the image of the Brothers as hardcore gang members. Some were, but that didn't mean they had committed the murders with which they had been charged. Moreover, the murders had occurred in a context of daily severe human rights abuses perpetrated against the inmates.

had to learn about the canon of ethics, the Geneva Convention Article 15, United Nations law. We studied the Attica trial—they were in the same conditions as we were. We studied the Dred Scott case. We did all this studying. Then when the lawyers came, one or two of us had to articulate it to them. At first we were stand-offish.”

They screened their potential lawyers. They were especially suspicious of some of the leftist white lawyers who had been drawn to the case. “We challenged them,” Lee admits. “We said to [People’s Law Office attorney] Jeffrey Haas, ‘Are you prejudiced?’ He said, ‘I don’t think there’s anyone who’s not prejudiced.’ His frankness won us over.”

Victory

The Brothers and activists and lawyers involved describe the whole case as an example of the ways racism and oppression manifest themselves inside and outside of the prison. “If one person does something in the black community, they arrest five or 10 people,” notes Kennon.

The prosecution worked hard to foster the image of the Brothers as hardcore gang members. Some were, but that didn’t mean they had committed the murders with which they had been charged. Moreover, the murders had occurred in a context of daily severe human rights abuses perpetrated against the inmates.

Many in Chicago and around the country also recognized the larger symbolism of the case and joined the fight. Activist comedian Dick Gregory and journalist Lou Palmer, among others, spoke out on their behalf. The National Conference of Black Lawyers also called for their acquittal. And through it all their families, who held weekly meetings, provided the backbone.

“They kept us focused,” says Williams. “Sometimes we’d be ready to fight and they’d remind us we had to stay together as one. We had mothers with sons in different gangs calling each other.”

The lawyers, the Brothers, and their supporters got more and more confident as the trial went on. There was massive community support for the accused, and the prosecution kept contradicting itself and calling highly questionable witnesses. The prosecution’s numerous setbacks included the revelation that guard Danny Dill changed his testimony after being offered a lifetime job and other privileges by the state, and the confession by another witness that he bought heroin with his \$2,000 in witness fees.

Deutsch feels the community awareness and support made a crucial difference in the trial. “It’s not like you could say any one juror was influenced, but it’s more like you throw a pebble in the water and the ripples spread out,” he says. “It was a campaign of sensitizing the community to racism and the death penalty.”

On May 9, 1981—Mother’s Day—the verdict came in. In about five hours, the jury of seven blacks and five whites turned in not-guilty verdicts on over 57 counts of murder.

“The courtroom just went ballistic with hoorays,” says Hill. “It was like a religious revival. Our prayers had been answered.”

“It was a Mother’s Day gift to all our mothers,” adds Lee.

Since the 10 were acquitted, the charges against the second group were dropped. Throughout the harrowing trial, only one man, in the second group, had “turned state’s evidence”—accepted a deal in exchange for testifying against his co-defendants. Lee points to this fact as evidence of the strong bonds that formed between them.

Moving On

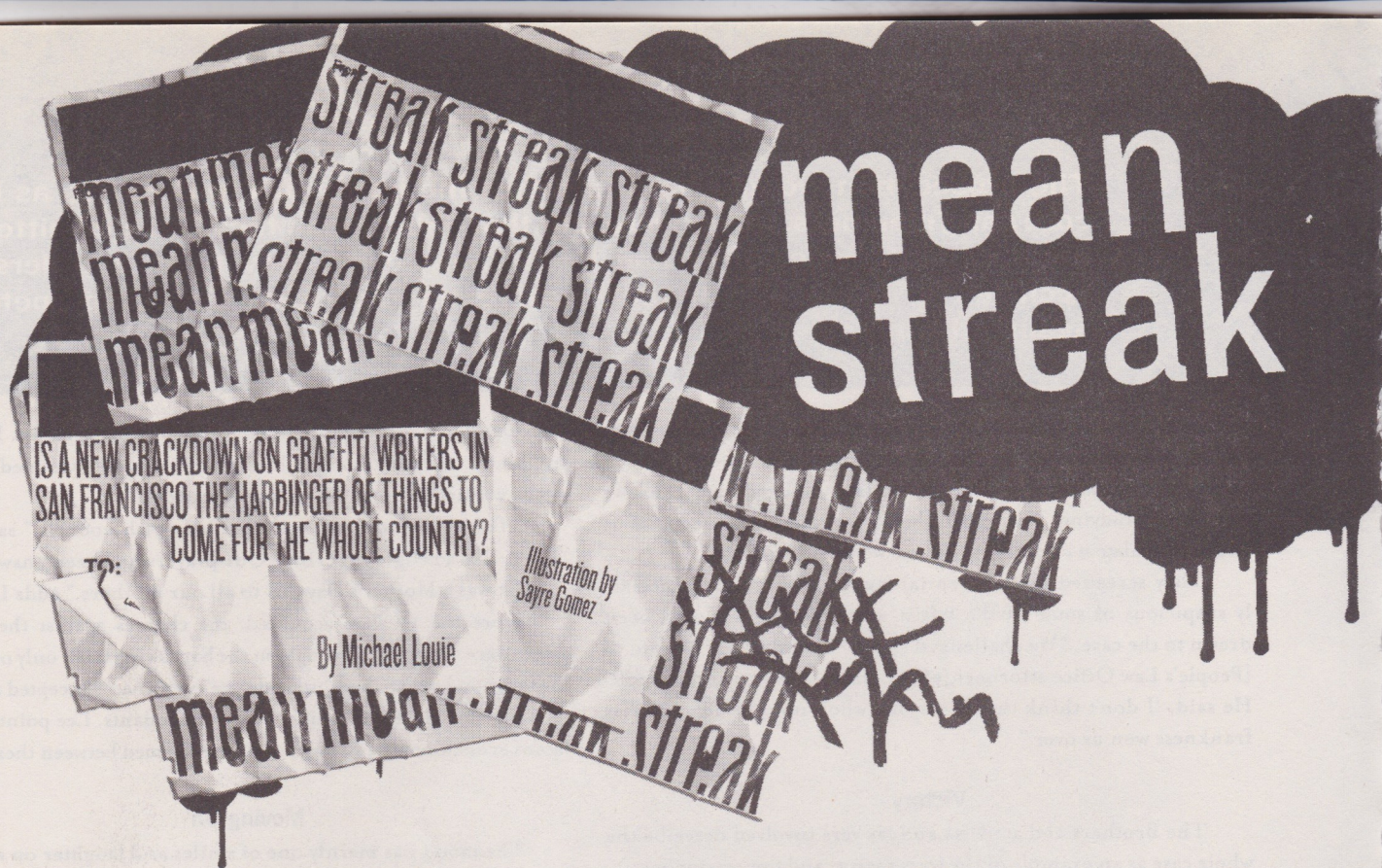
The mood was mainly one of smiles and laughter on a Saturday afternoon in May 2004 as Lee, Williams, Harris, and Jackson reminisced about the almost three years they spent together fighting—literally—for their lives. They talked about the abuses at Pontiac and the way they changed as a result of their incarceration and unique struggles.

“When inmates come out of prison you go through post-traumatic stress,” says Lee. “When you’re in a five-by-nine foot cell all day, the administration’s power is based on domination. They determine how much toilet paper and soap you get. They force you not to trust anyone, to become self-centered, to hoard things. Everything in there is based on domination; it still has an impact on me. Dealing with my family, I’m still self-centered. It’s still about me, me, me.”

“When someone’s released, it’s hard to accept an environment not based on domination,” adds Harris. “To find self worth outside of these 30-foot walls . . . A lot of times the person wanders.”

For an ex-con, getting a job can be a daunting or near-impossible proposition and for Lee, who has gone on to be an advocate for youth and social justice, it was no different. “When I was released at age 27, I had never had a job, never had a driver’s license, didn’t have a valid Social Security card,” he says. “I had pressure from the parole officer to get a job, but I had no support, no idea where to go for training, I had never even heard of a resume. Prison doesn’t equip you to function out here.”

For the Pontiac Brothers, prison didn’t equip them for much of anything—but they found what they needed to fight for their rights and their lives by looking inside themselves. It’s a lesson these 17 men continue to live by decades later. ©



Hear 101 is camped out behind a big metal dumpster because he sees a garbage truck swallowing street trash and it looks like it's headed this way. "It's nothing to worry about," he assures me, "if they come in here we'll just walk out through the side." With his back against a concrete wall, he shakes a can of paint as he hits rewind on his little tape player. When he hits play, the Velvet Underground's "I'm Waiting for the Man" rattles through a tiny speaker.

It's not the garbage man that scares Heart—the police, however, are a different matter. He points to the 30-foot walls that surrounded us on three sides, trapping us in the pit of this rectangle. "We're pretty much fucked if the police come in here," he says. He thinks about it for a moment as he looks over his shoulder and says, "But I'll probably try to run anyway."

Heart isn't being paranoid. He's built up a impressive file with the San Francisco police—he's been arrested 10 times for writing and if he gets caught painting on brick and concrete again, he's not going to get off easy. Heart isn't alone—graffiti writers across the Bay Area have been feeling the heat of a graffiti crackdown that threatens to spread across the country.

In March 2003, a San Francisco grand jury indicted five members and three "associates" of a graffiti crew known widely as KUK (some say it stands for "Kill Until Killed") on 24 charges including felony vandalism, conspiracy, and malice. The indictment was far worse than previous graffiti prosecutions in the Bay Area because of a statute under which graffiti can be considered a gang-related crime.

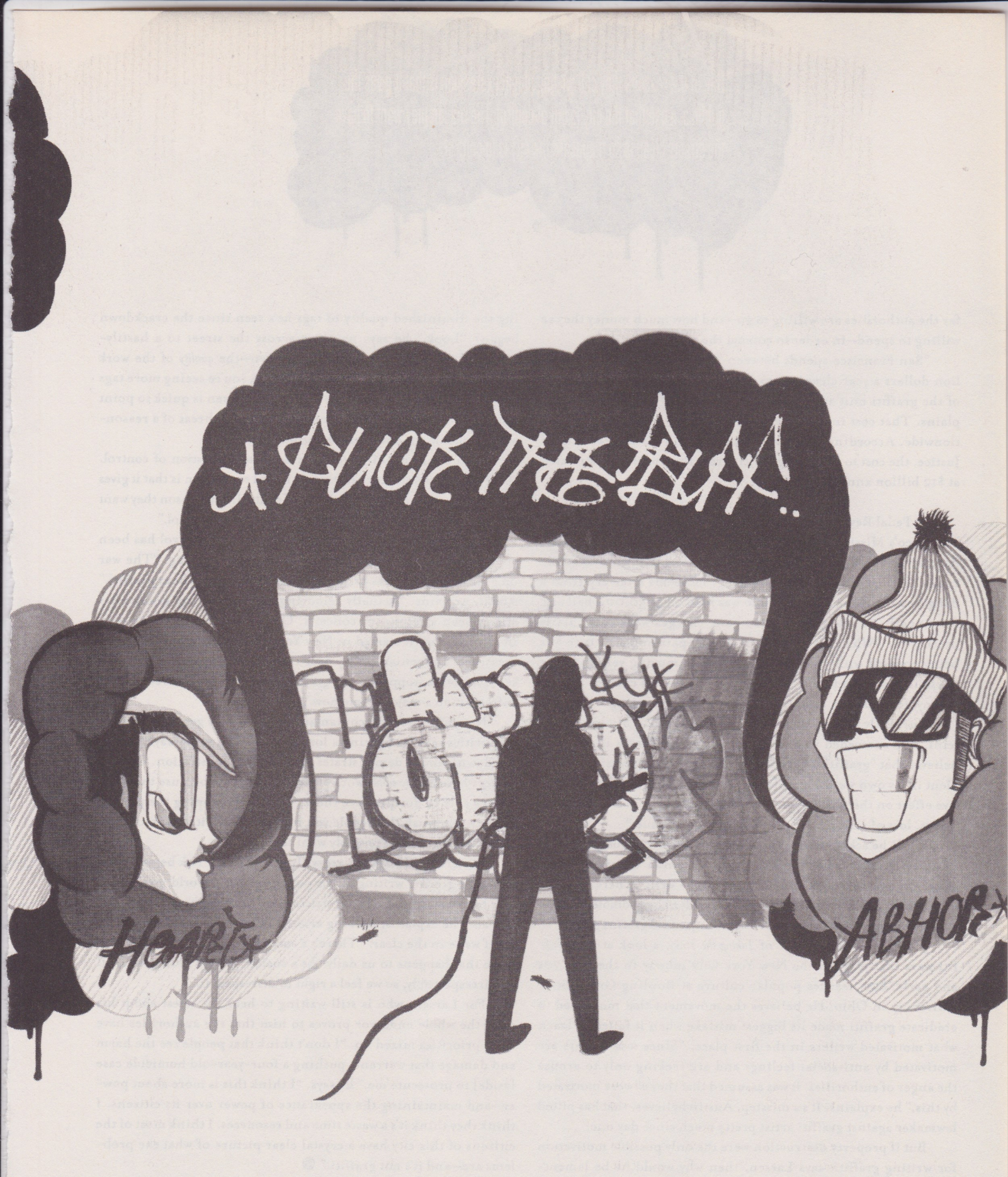
The KUK case marks the first time that a district attorney in California took advantage of 1997's Youth Crime Initiative (YCI)

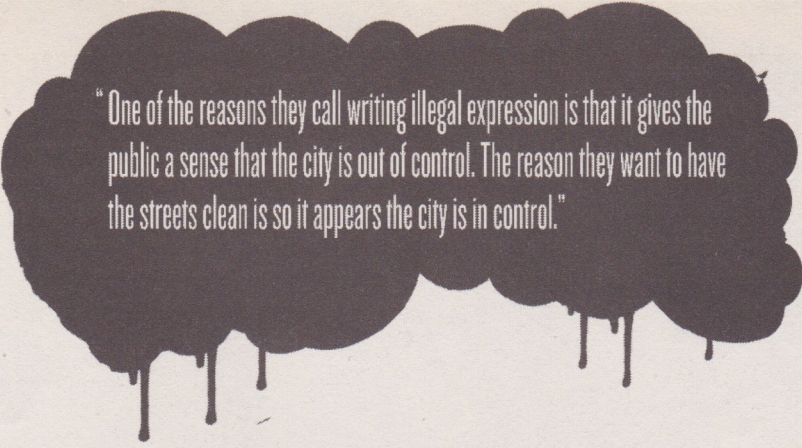
and 2000's Proposition 21 in pursuing a case in which graffiti was the only criminal act committed. According to the YCI, three or more persons involved in criminal activity can be considered a "criminal street gang," while Proposition 21 lowered the amount of damages for felony vandalism from \$50,000 to \$400, and expanded the list of crimes applicable under the infamous Three Strikes Law to include felony vandalism. "Gang enhancements," such as the kind outlined in the YCI can add years of prison time to the defendant's sentence if he or she is convicted.

Critics of the KUK case say that they are being prosecuted under a law that was primarily created to curb violent felonies. Earlier this year it looked like the law was on the critics' side, as defense lawyers succeeded in getting the gang enhancements dropped. But their hope faded in June when a state Appeals court overturned that ruling. Now, more than a year and a half after the original grand jury indictment, the defense was right back where it started.

Maitreya Badami, the lawyer for the defense, believes that in this case the prosecution is misusing the law. "The gang statute is a sort of preamble that states the basis and purpose of a street gang is violence, and that gang activities are intended to support the gang financially," she says, "The impression that I get is they're using the gang enhancement to make the statement that the city has zero tolerance for graffiti."

There's a reason for all this conflict, struggle, and raising the stakes. What the KUK case represents is a larger national trend in the crackdown on graffiti. What Heart describes as a "no holds barred, we're going to shut the fucking graffiti scene down" movement is spreading to cities all over the country. Prosecuting graffiti along the same lines as violent crimes is a big indication of how





"One of the reasons they call writing illegal expression is that it gives the public a sense that the city is out of control. The reason they want to have the streets clean is so it appears the city is in control."

far the authorities are willing to go—and how much money they're willing to spend—in order to combat the practice.

"San Francisco spends between five million and seven million dollars a year cleaning up graffiti," Sandy Cuadra, director of the graffiti unit at the city's Department of Public Works, explains. That cost increases exponentially when you spread it nationwide. According to a 2002 report by the US Department of Justice, the cost to clean up graffiti across the country is estimated at \$12 billion annually.

At Pedal Revolution, a not-for-profit bike repair shop in San Francisco's Mission District, David Larsen, a 31-year-old defendant in the KUK case, stands among a pile of half-assembled bicycles. Tall, skinny, and unassuming, he seems a far cry from a dangerous criminal. Larsen, who was held on \$250,000 bail and faces nearly 20 felonies, says the gang charges were particularly overblown. "What I'm accused of doing—painting a picture—is being equated with shooting a gun from a moving vehicle. That doesn't seem right to me," he says. "This case has cost me a lot of money, friendships, and time. It's been very damaging."

Currently prosecuting the case is assistant DA Michael Mancini, who succeeded in reinstating the gang charges in July. He believes that "graffiti is a form of violence that's aggressive and violent in its own way," he explains. "It has an enormously destructive effect on the world outside of graffiti. There's loss of property values, loss of civic pride—it's a serious social issue."

While he acknowledges that there are differences between what he calls "graffiti crews" and the more common criminal "street gang," he says there are close similarities as well. "There's a common thread of anti-social behavior that tends to be promoted among gangs," he explains. "KUK was a highly organized graffiti gang."

Joe Austin, the author of *Taking the Train*, a look at the graffiti wars that plagued the New York City subway in the late '70s and early '80s, teaches popular culture at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He believes the movement that mobilized to eradicate graffiti made its biggest mistake when it failed to learn what motivated writers in the first place. "Since some writers are motivated by anti-social feelings and are seeking only to arouse the anger of authorities, it was assumed that they all were motivated by this," he explains. It's a misstep, Austin believes, that has pitted lawmaker against graffiti artist pretty much since day one.

But if property destruction were the only possible motivation for writing graffiti, says Larsen, then why would he be lament-

ing the diminished quality of tags he's seen since the crackdown began? "Look," he says pointing across the street to a hastily-scribbled tag. "Graffiti hasn't gone down—the *quality* of the work has gone down. People are painting faster, you're seeing more tags versus pieces because everyone is scared." Larsen is quick to point out, however, that the fear comes not from the threat of a reasonable punishment, but of an unreasonable one.

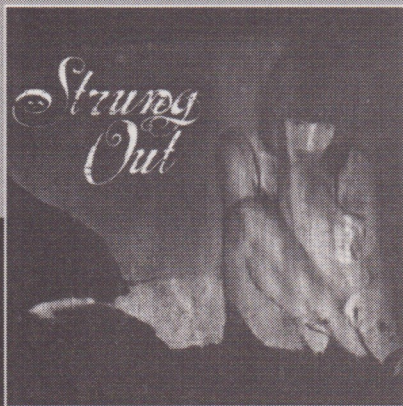
For Larsen, it ultimately boils down to a question of control. "One of the reasons they call writing illegal expression is that it gives the public a sense that the city is out of control. The reason they want to have the streets clean is so it *appears* the city is in control."

The need for local governments to look in control has been at the base of anti-graffiti action since the beginning. "The war on graffiti in NYC was primarily about *politics*, not about graffiti," Austin explains. "Actually removing and preventing graffiti has always been a secondary concern. One of the things you've seen in graffiti since it started in New York and Philadelphia is an increasingly Draconian policy over time toward minor crimes that seem to be unstoppable. It's gone from being a relatively minor infraction to a major crime now."

No matter how draconian anti-graffiti laws get, says Austin, authorities may be fighting a losing battle. "In some ways [cracking down] simply demonstrates their level of frustration. Graffiti writers have an *incredible* work ethic. You see this because the writers are able to out-produce them. Constantly upping the penalty is a way to punish the people you find and make it so unattractive to anyone who might possibly want to do it."

Writers like Heart 101 are willing to take the risk because they see their graffiti writing as an outlet against a world gone mad. "We have a lot of shit like advertising and politics shoved down our throats," he explains, peeking around the edge of the dumpster to see if we're in the clear. "There's a sort of mental and physical violence that happens to us daily. As a society, we are living really ill and irresponsibly, so we feel a right to disrespect it."

For Larsen, who is still waiting to hear the latest about his case, the whole endeavor proves to him that the authorities have their priorities mixed up. "I don't think that people see the harm and damage that warrants pushing a four-year-old homicide case [aside] to prosecute me," he says. "I think this is more about power—and maintaining the appearance of power over its citizens. I think they think it's a waste time and resources. I think most of the citizens of this city have a crystal clear picture of what the problems are—and it's not graffiti." ©



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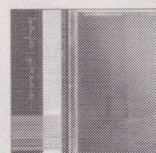
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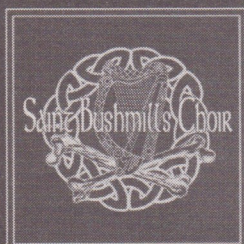
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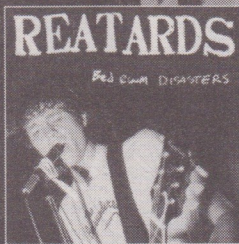
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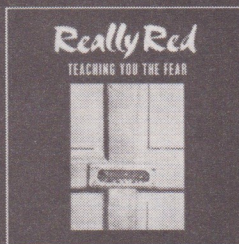
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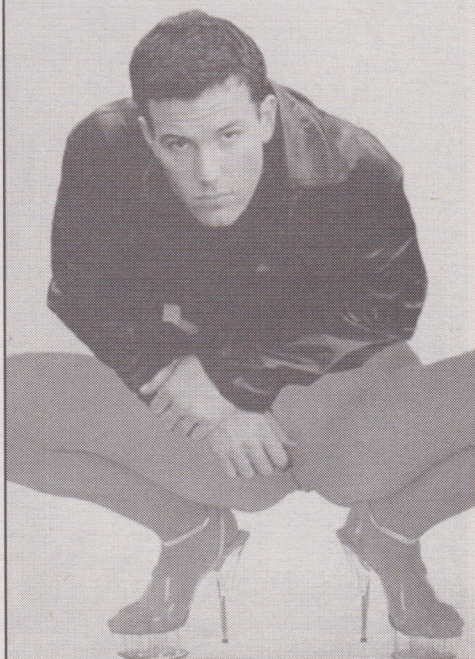
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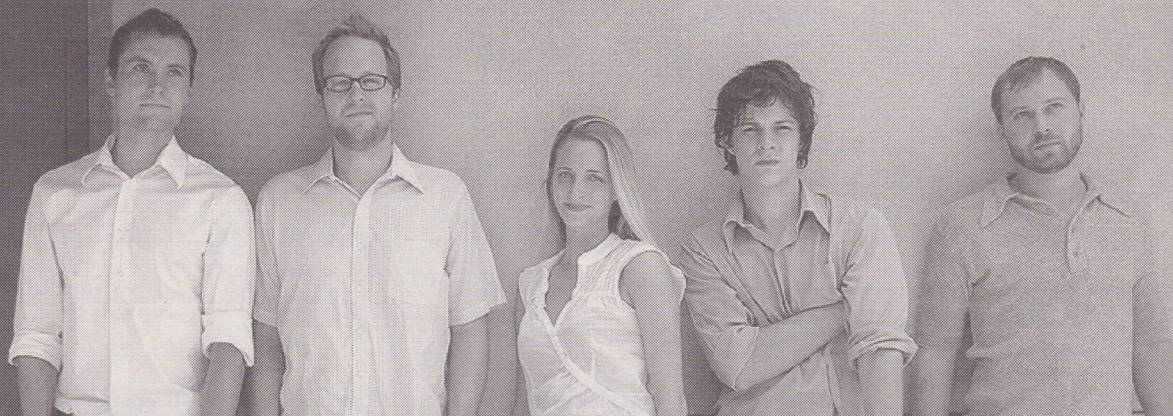
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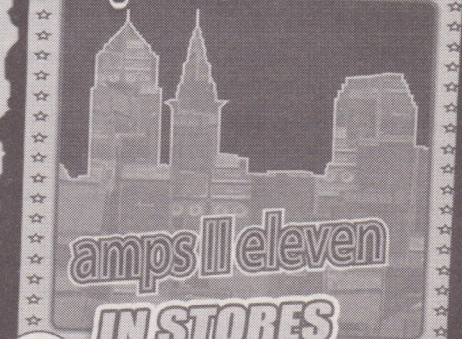
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columns

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Give me heaven or give me cannoli: New York stays high.

The final clutch-
es of New York were
the same as they ever
are, like a Cassavettes

movie: over just when you started getting used to its weirdness and pacing. My days there were slower than they have ever felt on previous trips. Took the usual hustle to first gear and kept it there, and thusly, the grip and grin and profesh ordeal were minimal. The back-and-forth rushes from midtown office lunch to purgatorial shepherdings at photoshoots to dinners where I am the only one not talking about revenue streams was supplicated with crafting with J-Shep and Shabbat dinner with Sasha and his sweet, curly-headed fam, to fortuitous trashdigs at Coney Island, to doing the prison yard squat on a corner in the LES at 2 am with Elliott, staying low and avoiding managers and sharks and tarts, and Elliott looking into the sky and saying, in all seriousness *"When the end time comes, I want to be laying in my bed, listening to Dylan, wearing a mohair suit, with a beautiful woman I love feeding me cannoli."*

Oh, sure, we saw some bands. Sure, we did our work obligations, sure we stood in front of Max Fish and tried to scoot away from drunken too-close talkers, from leprechaun-sized indie-rappers, from the humpty dancing throngs at the DFA party—which every year is the party everyone wants to be at and conversely is always the most un-elaborate and tedious strain of BO-ring. Always: You make the rounds, shuffling between mustachioed men, spy the 5I people you don't want to see, fingers in ears so the 808s do not pop yr drums, then someone makes almost-jokes/commentary about the still prevailing prevalence of social cocaine and we bail after four minutes because we still like minimal techno better than throwback house, and we still like Queensbridge classix more than we like ironic sweatpants on the dancefloor.

Another night, we all went to a different party, where several hundred people formed a soccer-melee style crush/potential Altamont around the velvet rope. The doorman screamed over the please-pleas of "I have been here 45 minutes" and "I am on the list" with only: *"I am only letting people in on the basis of who you are and who you know. That is the system and the only way you are getting in."* Admirable, indeed. We got inside, danced and sweated with J-Shep amidst modellescent women in varying stages of undress or eating disorder as well as many men, many many many many men in big coats and trucker caps from all the five boroughs who were wild from the Open Bar. People screamed along and bounced "DIP-SET! DIP-SET! DIPSET!", hands like swords slicing the air, boys tackle-moshing. It felt like Lollapalooza.

I bailed and I walked around alone, hiding my lit cigarette in the cup of my hand, (cos fuck a smoking ban).

I walked and stared. And wondered.

Which kids on this dancefloor were really in love?

Who was blacked out?

Why was Seymour Stein here?

Who talked to their parents today, and do their parents have any idea?

Just which bloodthirsty babes, which desperate youths were having the motherfucking time of their lives?

Right then and right there, which of them was *at the pinnacle?*

At the absolute brink of sensual satisfaction and enjoyment?

Whose life would never, ever get better than that night—and how would they feel when they realized that?

How would they later rate it, contemplating, remembering it all, while dancing at their own wedding reception? Or after jerking off?

Or sitting at their desk in the *Spin* offices come Monday morning?



I just wondered.

Because I wanted to know.

Then!:

One wall was projected with a 20-foot high/wide video of a naked Japanese woman with her head in a Plexiglas box, while a procession of schoolgirls shit into the hole on the top of the box, onto the woman's head. I stood next to the door, just outside the shit-video room. There, I watched the faces of passerby who could not turn their eyes away. I watched the faces of the men, pointing with drink in hand and laughing like it was *Chappelle's Show* reruns. All I could think of is what that girl needed or wanted bad enough to be willing to let a dozen-plus other girls shit on her face, neck and head for money, what sort of desperation for something must you have in order to endure? Stained into my brain is the slight flitting of the woman's eyes, so active under her eyelids, her lips slightly parting to take in a breath between girls. She was perfectly still otherwise.

Before that, we saw Miles' band, Perfect Panther, play in the basement of North Six, and they were fantastic, and Miles' solo's were like the ghost of Greg Sage, sssscorching. After the show, we were standing outside a bodega, while Cali was inside redeeming our scratch off tickets for more scratch off tickets, and a dude from a Brooklyn Dance Punk Band™ stopped at me and J-Shep and says "Where do I know you—?" I said "Jessica Hopper." and he says "Yeah, she is in town this week." Yeah. um, I know. Julianne tried to convince him that Weds. and Thurs. are the "new weekend" and that he should stop partying on the weekends and just go home. He could not comprehend our social transaction at all.

Any time I encountered anyone in position of even moderate music fame all week in NY, save for Ted Leo (he was buying vegan jerky, in fact), they were positively bazonkered on THE DRUGS.

They were like day four of the freebase bender, drinking wine since morning kind of wired and stupid and you could hear their harried synapses firing and burning-out like a string of Black Cats.

All evidence that availed itself to us during the night, during these nonsense exchanges with people who were faded ghosts, who did not hardly exist—was that what fame gets you janky looking women/men on your arm, people doing spilled coke off your clothing, age etching itself into your slack, sweaty saddle of a face, and a cadre of people who laugh at both your blathering anecdotes and more secretly, your total incapacity, ignoring the flecking of spittle on their faces while you pontificate in a high decibel bar-yell.

It is sometimes the burden of being a non-drinker, watching people waste their prettiest years night after night, to expend themselves as if they are elastic and infinite, to expend themselves as statement, as a commitment to the lifestyle, as if the totem to excess is the 'freedom' that minor celebrity affords them. I knew all kindsa genius people who never came back from these fringes, or moved into its velvet-lined ditch and rotted slowly, people who went to heaven instead of rehab. With this in mind, it is hard to watch people drink and get high and think of it as casual, social and recreational.

Night ended with an early am silent/epic cab ride back to the borough where our sweat-damp heads were cooled in the night air while we chain smoked and talked, as J Shep and I are wont to do pre-dawn, going on of our dreams of publishing a feminist teen magazine, of quitting smoking, of subsistence living in the tropics, God, men, bell hooks, the pedagogy of love. There is nothing quite like having a best friend.

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If you want to be in contact: mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com. More of my writing at: <http://tiny.abstracddynamics.org>.



Being a good writer is three percent inspiration and 97 percent being able to stay off the Internet.

—Something I read, um, on the Internet

I guess that makes me not a very good

writer. OK, OK, don't all agree at once. But what's puzzling me is how I managed to procrastinate and waste time before the Internet was invented.

The first time I heard I heard the word "Internet" must have been around 1986 or 1987, at the Shred of Dignity warehouse in San Francisco. Tom Jennings, Gilman volunteer, founder of *Homocore* zine, and all-around technological genius, was trying to explain it to me.

As near as I could understand, it involved hooking a lot of computers up so they could talk to each other. It made no sense to me: even if computers could talk, which as far as I knew, they couldn't, what could they possibly have to say to each other?

I'd just bought my first computer, a Macintosh 512k. For those even less computer-savvy than me, that means it had approximately one-tenth of one percent of the computing power of an average laptop today. It was a big clunky thing that weighed 20 or 30 pounds and took about half an hour to change a comma into a period, but it was one of the marvels of the age.

I used it to produce issues of *Lookout* magazine, which, prior to 1986, I'd done by writing the stories by hand, then typing them, correcting mistakes either with white-out or starting the whole page over, then shrinking the text on a Xerox machine, cutting it up into pieces and pasting it onto sheets to create the final layout.

A computer, once I began to figure it out, could do all of that in the same operation, which meant I was going to save enormous amounts of time. Curious, then, that while I used to get an issue of *Lookout* out every month, once I switched to the computer, it started taking me six months, then nine months, eventually a year or more between issues.

True, the computerized issues were bigger, had more graphics, were flashier and more widely read, but probably not enough so to explain why it took me five, ten, even 20 times as long to produce them, especially now that I had all that modern technology at my fingertips.

And that, I stress, was long before the Internet came along to distract me. Yet my memories of the late '80s and early '90s involve enormously long hours of sitting at the computer doing, erm, something or other. What could it possibly have been? Even computer solitaire hadn't been invented yet.

I do recall whiling away a great deal of time changing text from plain to italics to bold and back again, or seeing how my as-yet unfinished article looked in every font available, including

Zapf Dingbats. And the early Macintosh had some rudimentary puzzle or game that was slightly more complicated than tic-tac-toe. That was usually enough to keep this monkey fascinated into the wee hours.

Now that I think of it, it's a wonder that I got anything done, but somehow during those years I managed not only to publish 20 issues of *Lookout*, but also acquire a university degree, start a record company, and release some 75 records. Not to mention going to about a thousand punk rock shows, taking three trips overseas, and, oh, almost forgot, playing around 100 shows and recording two albums and two EPs with my band.

And the main thing I remember is wasting time on the computer? The human memory is a very selective thing. But it's true that I wasted an awful lot of time on the computer back then. Probably nowhere near as much as I do nowadays, but still enough that I can't help wondering what I might have accomplished if the electronic idiot box hadn't constantly sucked me into its orbit.

Ever since the Internet it's been much easier to justify spending half my life staring at a screen. It's "educational," I swear, and if you give me a minute, I'll provide you with an example of the vitally important things I've learned while randomly surfing around. Here, I'll just type it into Google: "Useful things I have learned on the Internet." Um, it says, "Your search did not match any documents." Yes, well, Google doesn't know everything, does it?

Here's something: on the rare occasion when I'm writing some sort of fact-based article, I might suddenly need to know the date Napoleon was crowned emperor or what year the first Bad Religion record came out (nah, I already knew that). It used to be that I'd have to drag myself down to the library (assuming it wasn't the middle of the night, which is when I did much of my writing), plow through the Dewey Decimal System and who knows how many books, and maybe, just maybe I'd find the answer.

On the Internet, however, I need only type a few words, press a button, and I'm presented with thousands of answers. There are only two drawbacks: first, the thousands of answers will probably all contradict each other; and second, before I get round to actually looking at them, I'll end up checking my e-mail, reading my hometown newspaper, seeing what some bonehead said about me on some bonehead message board, compose some irate reply to said bonehead message that will get accidentally erased while I'm checking my e-mail again, and then, realizing it's three o'clock in the morning and I'm totally exhausted, fall into bed having totally forgotten why I was on the computer in the first place.

I know I'm not the only one who uses—or misuses—the computer like this. Apparently they now have 12-step groups for it, Internet Addicts Anonymous or something like that? Yes, I can confirm that I just typed that one into Google and got over 50,000 hits. Better yet, you don't even need to leave the comfort of your computer to join: many of them offer online discussion groups.

Oh my, I've got iTunes set to play songs at random and it just came up with "Artificial Life" by Operation Ivy. The refrain keeps echoing in my head, but I can't remember what comes next.

I haven't got the CD with me, so I'll look up the lyrics on, where else, the Internet:

*American culture, Disneyland freak show
Screen in your living room
A window for your tomb*

I remember the "American culture, Disneyland freak show" bit, but not the "window for your tomb" part. In fact, I don't remember most of the lyrics to the song; it's like I'm reading them for the first time, and I put that record out. Is this finally a case of learning something useful on the Internet, or am I merely getting a reminder of how easy it is to drift away from real life into an electronic simulacrum?

Some people argue in favor of the Internet because it enables you to communicate with millions of people all over the world. Others argue against it because it can keep you holed up in your room, not even communicating with the people you live with. Both are true, of course, but arguing against the Internet is pretty much a lost cause, wouldn't you think?

I remember people having similar arguments about television in the 1950s, my father especially, when he was trying to justify our being the last family on the block to get a TV. "It's only for people who haven't got the brains to entertain themselves," he'd claim. "You'll get a lot more out of reading books."

He may have been right, but we finally got a TV anyway, and now most people under 50 could barely imagine a world without television. Someday it'll be like that with the Internet, too. It probably already is for people of college age or younger. And yet books keep getting written and read, people still find reasons to go out in public to socialize instead of sending e-mails and instant messages, and the much-vaunted "information overload" hasn't yet caused the human race's collective nervous system to melt down.

But for me personally, it's a problem. Writing is the most important work I'm doing these days—well, the most important apart from the ongoing project of learning to be a happier, healthier human being. And while it's possible to use a computer for writing without constantly being on the Internet, it's not easy. At least not for me.

It's a bit—no, a lot—like drugs or alcohol. I used to go out intending to have just a couple hits of dope or a couple lines of cocaine or a couple swigs of whiskey, and the next thing I knew it'd be a few years later and my life would be even a bigger mess than it was the last time I looked at it.

But I don't need drugs or alcohol to function. I can cut them out of my life entirely if they're a problem, and that's what I ultimately did. The Internet, well, it's not absolutely essential, but it's a huge aid to the kind of work I do and want to continue doing.

Just getting this column to you, for example . . . If it weren't for the Internet, I would have had to have it finished a week or two ago, would have had to type- or handwrite it and put it in a letter to send to the States, where somebody else would have had to typeset it, probably adding a few more mistakes to my own. Even though newspapers

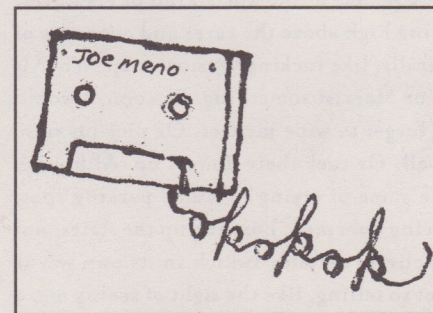
and magazines managed to operate that way for a couple centuries, it seems so ponderous and complicated now.

Instead I can get a last-minute e-mail from the editor shamefacedly admitting that he's forgotten again to remind us that the columns are due and payable immediately (his header: "I'm going to hell this time"), and we geniuses could sit down at our terminals, come up with brilliant concepts for columns, write and proofread them, and e-mail them back to the editor in a matter of hours.

In theory, anyway. In reality, you'll be reading this sometime this winter, by which time you'll probably be finished moaning or gloating about the results of the election, while I'm writing it a week before said election, without a clue as to who or what will win. By the time you read this, President Kerry might be sending 100,000 more troops to Iraq or President Bush might have been found to be a space alien. But I have no way of knowing this, so in case you're wondering why I'm babbling on about computers and the Internet when the fate of western civilization might appear to hang in the balance, that's why.

Instead I present you with this piece of relative fluff, a meditation, however shallow, on "these modern times," and a demonstration that the Internet is more than a vast, swirling cesspool of trivia and misinformation. Despite its pitfalls and perils, despite its ability to suck endless amounts of creative energy out of billions of people and turn it into the cyberspace equivalent of hot air, it does have its uses.

Well, it gave me something to write about, didn't it?



Invisibility for fun and profit

Happiness doesn't come easy: not for anybody. I tried to keep that in mind as I grabbed the next delivery, a massive, several hundred

dollar birthday bouquet, all purple and red and lovely, which I had to drop it off quick because my next delivery was on the far north side of the city. I hopped out of the van, ran up the steps, with the sloshing vase full of flowers in my hand, rang the bell, and when no one answered, I hopped the fence, prayed there was no dog with nut-targeting x-ray vision, and left the arrangement on the back porch, just in time for Pavement's "Summer Babe" to come crashing on.

It was the summer I was a flower deliveryman. It was the summer I was truly in love with my job. What was so great about the gig wasn't the free bouquets I got to bring home to my lady, which, like when I worked at the Solo plastics factory and came home with plastic forks, began to fail to impress. It

wasn't the most amazing boss of all time, Laurie D., who would argue about why John Wayne was a bad man and why socialism could work, all while I was loading the various one-, two-, and three-hundred dollar arrangements that had to be dropped off at fancy dinner parties and funeral homes all over the city. It wasn't the van, though the van was bad-ass: one lone nightmare of a delivery vehicle, with one side so smashed that it looked like it had just come from a demolition derby. It was being made invisible for just a few hours at a time.

Like most mortals, I had never been into the enormous, yet sadly gaudy penthouses that line the lake along the east side of inner Lake Shore Drive: the storybook-sized, turn of the century museums of the lifestyles of the richest citizens of Chicago, bearing the finer tastes of the very oldest money. For those two years, I delivered flower arrangements to the homes of the richest people in the city, families who owned hotel chains, newscasters, real estate moguls, flower arrangements that cost about as much as my rent, flower arrangements that would die in a week, flower arrangements I would then replace with new arrangements only a few days later. It got easy. After a few days, I began to see the customers as inhuman, these rich, old ladies lounging around in million dollar design pantsuits or worse, like the time some sweetheart old enough to be my grandma's grandma answered the door in a filmy white nightie. Here they were, with all the fucking money in the world, blowing it on something as temporal and useless as a vase full of flowers. Literally, it was like the movie *Metropolis*, where I had to take three different elevators just to get to the top of the Hancock building to drop some old nutter her begonias. It got very easy to see these people as the worse kind of creatures, pampered, indulged, living high above the cares and concerns of the rest of the world, literally, like fucking 99 stories up. Why? It seemed fucking Biblical or Marxist something. So soon, I would accidentally on purpose forget to wipe my feet. Or pick my nose and then ring the doorbell. Or fuck their flowers up. Although, it seemed like I loved the game of trying to find a parking spot, running past the interfering doormen, hustling up the stairs, not wanting to wait for the delivery elevator (which in its own way is so fucking archaic and yet so telling, like the sight of seeing me, a delivery man, in their personal elevator is going to remind them there are ugly people roaming the streets) then finding the right door and putting the goods in the person's hand, I started to hate the people, the people I had thought before I started the job would be so happy to see me, because rarely did any of these people express any symptom of joy. Rarely were they surprised. I would hand them these immaculately designed pieces of living art and they sort of nod and close the door in my face. Very soon I began to play the "Assassin of Fortune" game, whereby I would pretend I was not delivering flowers but bombs, terrible, terrible bombs only disguised as flowers but filled with deadly, rusty nails.

About tipping: Nope. There was none, which again helped reinforce the "Assassin of Fortune" fantasy.

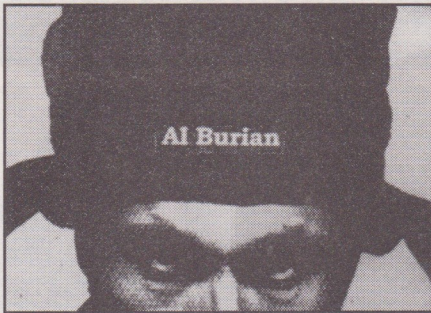
One day, while I was stuck in traffic on the Kennedy, and listening to nothing on the radio, because there is never anything on the radio, I took out a Sharpie and wrote on the ceiling, right above the driver's seat, "I'm a driver. I'm a winner." I was half-heartedly reprimanded for that, but it helped reading it sometimes, because I was alone for eight hours a day, not really alone, but alone the way a lot of people are at their jobs, sitting behind a steering wheel, or a desk, surrounded by people, and yet really able to talk to anybody. My poor girl, when I came home from work, I would commit capital murder on her ears because I had to talk to somebody. As soon as she said, "How was your day?" I'd be off.

"I got to deliver twice to the maternity ward and they actually let me drop it off in one of the rooms and I got to see the baby sleeping on its mom's tummy" and "I had to go to these fucking funeral parlor and the dead people were just sitting out on trays" and "I dropped off a centerpiece at this house and the woman told me I had to take off my shoes." Any minute detail became important, because I had been trapped, all alone in my little metal box of a van, and some sort of human contact was what I had been missing.

About tipping #2: no, that isn't true, one lady tipped all the time, and she was the one who got me thinking. Mrs. Miner, who I still smile about today. Mrs. Miner had a standing order for flowers every week, to be delivered on Friday, and so every Friday I would take an arrangement to her house, and she'd invite me and ask me if I wanted a cup of coffee, which I did, and I would set her arrangement down, and walk past the grand piano and there would be an amazing photo of her, from the '30s, when she was a bright-eyed brunette knock-out of a jazz singer, and we'd sit in her kitchen and she'd tell me what flowers she had planted in her window boxes or what Artie Shaw, the clarinet player, used to call her. I don't even know if she knew my name, but after awhile I'd say I had to go and she'd slip a five dollar bill in my hand. Every Friday. Every Friday.

The thing was this then: duh, these rich folks weren't inhuman; they were just very, very sad and very, very lonely. They had lost that thing, the thing you love in other people: that spark, that smile, that secret knowledge that this new person might tell you about some record or artist or painting, and you might, somehow, magically, change. They had traded that in for a high-rise and doorman and a sense of security because they had accumulated this thing we're all after, even if we say were not, a sense of safety, and it had them cut off from the world and pinned by fear. They were afraid to talk to me, not because I was gruesome or rude, but because, I think, when you have that kind of wealth, it becomes very easy to see people opposite from you as less than human, kind of like what I was doing.

So I stopped playing the "Assassin" game and if some old lady asked me to take my shoes off, I did. I was starting school in the fall and quitting the flowery delivery line, and I had begun to see something I had never thought about seeing. Above us all, in all those high-rise windows, were people just as lonely as me.

**Manitoba**

Friday afternoon, looking out the window onto a very straight stretch of highway—the road between Winnipeg and Regina, stretching out grey to the hori-

zon. The color of the sky matches, so that at the horizon line the world disappears into a blur, a flat wall of nothingness if you squint and lose your depth perception. Josef Krepelka described to me once his first time seeing the ocean, and how for a moment he couldn't find the horizon line, and so saw only the world as he knew it end and a wall of flat blue emptiness in front of him. "But then you see where the sky meets the water," he shrugged. "And five minutes later it's like, 'OK, ocean. What's the big deal?'"

Staring at things makes them mundane. To the left and right you see rolling, sparsely populated prairie. "This road is so straight you don't even need to listen to music," says Pete. "You don't need the stimulation." I tell him to put the van on cruise control, let go of the wheel, and take a nap. He is right about the music: why listen to it now, when everything is so perfectly boring? "It's called delayed gratification," explains Pete. I've never heard of such a thing. I am a person who will put anything into my mouth that is presented to me, instantly, without hesitation, as if it will be taken away from me in the next instant. The idea of saving up for later, thinking ahead, is all alien terrain to me. I have wised up, a little, over the years: now I understand that junk food equals stomach ache, beer makes me depressed the next day—I get the correlations, but I don't seem to actually modify my behavior, which is ingrained. Eat everything, as fast as possible: caveman logic, a shaky spurious way to take care of yourself in the absence of new and better ones presenting themselves.

Weird, insect-like threshing machines shamble their way across furrowed fields. Semis trundle by. Livestock of various sorts dot the landscape—lazy bovines, mostly; the occasional family of fiberglass deer, propped decoratively in front of the double-wide trailers someone calls home. From the vantage point of the insular interior of the punk-rock band van, it makes you feel useless and anti-human, vaguely makes you wish for some act of catastrophic obliteration to make it all cease and desist. I suppose that's a regular, everyday human fantasy: witness the current crop of summer blockbusters with Armageddon themes, *The Day After Tomorrow* with its deft one-upmanship of the nuclear winter television classic, *The Day After*. Both have tantalizing timelines, suggesting that you really ought to maximize the fun today, because tomorrow looks bad and the next day is definitely not

happening. Eat everything, as fast as possible: everyone longs for a disruption from their day to day. When you are an activist about it, when schedule and routine is what you exist to undermine, it makes you lonely in relation to the world around you. Regina: 362 kilometers.

We stop for gas in Austin, MB. One pump, full service, a surly teenage girl doing the filling up. The town of Austin appears to consist of a half-dozen shacks, several dozen broken-down, rusting trucks, and then this gas station, the nerve center of town, being itself also the service station, tire depot, and cafe. I see a few straggling old guys about, leering on the periphery, sizing us up. Otherwise it's just the teen employee, and then another kid, maybe 13 or 14, who comes screeching into the parking lot on a motorbike, looking for a fill-up. I stand around, hoping maybe I'll have the opportunity to engage someone in conversation, and thus glean some further window into life here in Austin. No such luck. Gas comes to \$100. Canadian.

Down the road we make another stop, this time at Ice Cream Island, MB. Two confused teenage boys vend ice cream with extreme inefficiency. There seems to be only teens and old people in the rural parts of Manitoba. I suppose that makes a certain amount of sense. The teens probably move away as fast as they can, or if they don't they probably get old pretty fast. The ice cream is good. I eat it too fast and get a headache.

Loitering, surly-looking young dudes huddle in the office of the adjoining gas station, the presence of four red-jacketed balls of testosterone putting a serious damper on my plan to steal maps. They are clustered around a tantalizing display: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, Regina. The provinces are big, open expanses of nothing, more topographical than urban/highway. Blank maps, almost. Landscapes without horizons; the eerie emptiness of gratification delayed forever, of a something that never comes. ©

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of Death Cab for Cutie
& The Postal Service

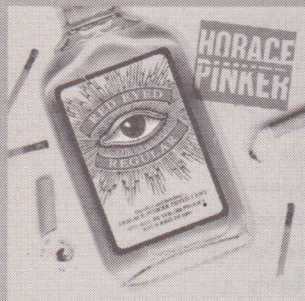
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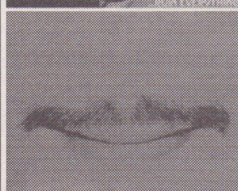


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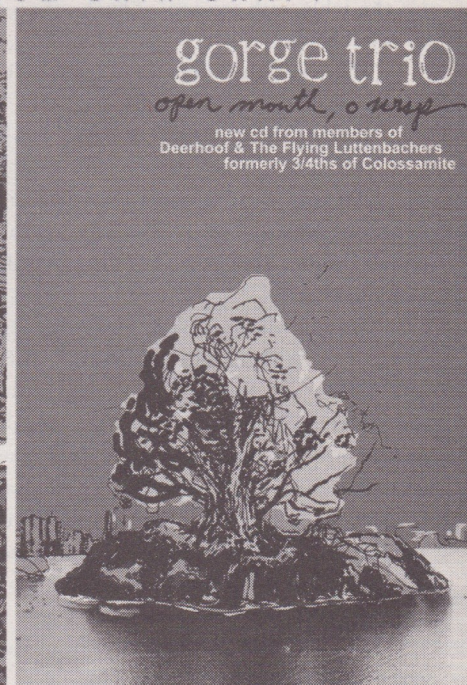
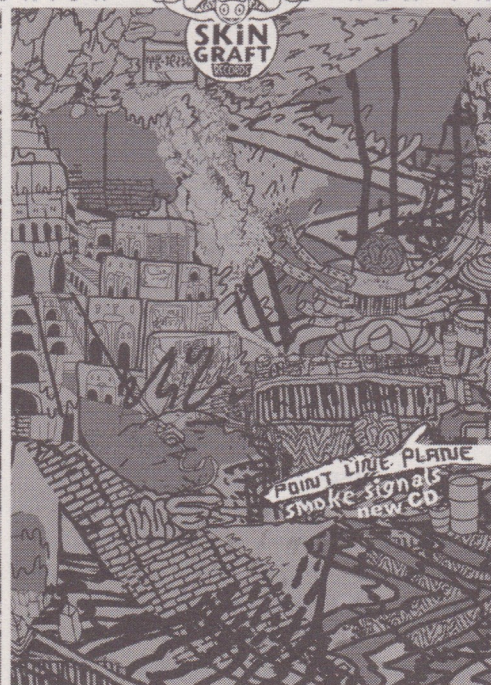
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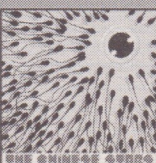
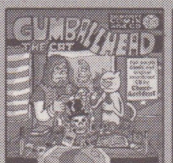
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I Guess

by Jennifer Krasinski

My girlfriend lost our baby. She didn't mean to, of course. We weren't even sure we

wanted to keep it, but it was going to be our decision. We were going to decide for ourselves whether or not we wanted to keep the baby, but then last night while we were sleeping, the baby went ahead and decided that it didn't want to keep us.

So that's that, I guess.

For dinner tonight, my girlfriend and I ate fried chicken. My cat stalks the scraps that still lie on our plates, but I push him off the table with my foot. "Fucking quit it," I tell him.

"Why can't she have a little?" my girlfriend asks.

"Human food is bad for cats," I tell her, "too rich."

"Kicking a cat is worse than feeding her some chicken," my girlfriend says. She knows I didn't kick him and that I'm only wearing socks.

"If you don't mind cleaning up piles of cat puke, then go ahead," I offer. I take my feet off the table, and my girlfriend leans in to pick a small, greasy piece of meat from a leg. She whistles and clicks her fingers so that the cat leaps onto her lap. I watch his tongue almost split in two trying to lick my girlfriend's fingers clean.

"He likes you more than me," I say.

My girlfriend smiles and coos at the cat, while the cat purrs low and loudly.

I guess the cat doesn't care that my girlfriend thinks he's a she.

She didn't get pregnant on purpose. I know that's the truth, but when she told me, I guess I freaked out. "I don't know how I feel," I told her, and I wasn't lying. "I need to think about it."

"You shouldn't have to think about how you feel," she sniped, "it's just something people do."

"And fuck you too," I said.

"Is there anything else on?" my girlfriend asks, "Unless you're really watching this."

I flip to *Armed and Dangerous*.

A sketch of a man's scowling face fades in over a flashing cop car light. A voice tells us that he's armed and dangerous. The voice asks us to call the number on our screen if we have any information on his whereabouts. There is a cash reward for any citizen providing information that leads to his arrest.

"Armed robbery?" I guess.

"Sexual assault," she yawns.

"With that haircut?" I say.

My girlfriend says nothing.

I change the channel to *Modern Magic*.

This week features the world-famous master of illusion, Jack Swann, and his assistant, Storm. Jack and Storm begin the show with a trick they call "The Swordsman's Swindle," during which Storm lies down in a long black box decorated with laughing skeletons dressed in eye patches and pirate hats. Jack slices into the box with cartoon-sized blades, and when he's

done, he splits the box in two and spins it around the stage. Storm proves to the audience that she's not dead by wiggling her hands and feet to a jazzy beat, and smiling like her life depends on it.

"She's smiling like her life depends on it," I say. I reach for a cigarette and shoo the cat off the table.

"That trick always creeps me out," says my girlfriend, and she pulls the hood of her sweatshirt over her head, and burrows her hands in her sleeves.

"Now you see it, now you don't," I say, and I change the channel until we hit some political program. Then I change the channel again, but now I forget to what.

I ask my girlfriend if she feels OK, and she says she feels kind of tired but otherwise good. I ask her if she needs anything. She says no, she needs nothing. I ask her what I can do, and she tells me there's nothing to be done.

I make like Hungry Monkey and pick pretend nits out of her hair. I put them in my mouth and chew them with an underbite and crossed eyes. "Yum, yum, yum," I say, in the low monotone of movie primates, "Hungry Monkey think you delicious." Then I make like Bad Monkey. I hop up and down on the sofa and try to kiss her face at the same time. "Bad Monkey love you," I say over and over again, jumping harder. "Bad Monkey love you very much." I reach my arms as wide as they can go and fall down on the floor next to her. I lock my arms around her legs and chew on her knees. "Yum, yum, yum," I say again,

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and I close my eyes to see her laughing.

My head bounces around on her lap as her legs shift. I feel her muscles twitch and quickly tighten beneath my grip. Her hand touches my head, and her hard finger-tips quickly flick through my hair.

"Come on," she sighs. I gnaw on her knees a little harder.

"But me Bad Monkey," I say.

"Just move one sec," she says, and she lifts my head off her lap and puts it onto the pillow next to her. Now my head is kinked on the couch while the rest of me is limp and lying crooked on the floor. I straighten out and look up as she stretches over me to the other side. She leans in so close, but nothing of us touches. She retracts with the remote in her hand and changes the channel. She grabs a napkin off the table, and dabs at the spit stain I left on her jeans.

"We should get TiVo," she offers, "then we'd only have to watch what we wanted to."

I'm in the kitchen to get a beer. My girlfriend doesn't want one. She says she's fine. I can't find the stupid fucking bottle opener, so I go back to the living room and get my lighter. I open the bottle with my lighter. It's not easy, but I do it. I stare at the television, but it just flashes past me. I look at my girlfriend. She's falling asleep. I stay standing in the doorway until I finish the whole beer. Then I go back to the kitchen to get another.

I have a new beer, but I left my lighter in the living room, and I don't fucking feel like getting it.

I don't fucking feel like anything.

I hear my girlfriend get up from the couch and go into the bedroom. I hear her shut the door. I pull my sleeve down around my hand and try to twist the bottle open, but it doesn't work. The cap bites right through my shirt and into my palm. I watch for blood, but my hand stays whole.

The phone rings. I pick it up.

"Hello," I warn it. Then there's silence.

"Can I speak to Shannon Bester please?" beeps in a voice.

"She's asleep," I say, and I open the bedroom door just a little to make sure I'm not lying.

"Is there a Mr. Bester I can speak to?" asks the voice.

"No," I tell it.

"Well sir, this is Noble Account Services calling on behalf of our new credit protection program. Is there a better time to reach her?"

I hear her breathing. I hang up the phone.

She is asleep.

She lies on her side, her hands tucked beneath her chin, her head gently bent towards her knees.

I could notice how she's curled up like a baby.

I could even wake her up.

I'm kind of crying.

I guess I know why, but I pretend to be crying for a different reason, because otherwise the crying doesn't make sense to me, and I don't think it's because I'm an asshole.

I pretend that my brother died, be-

cause that would be an actual tragedy. I imagine I would get the call from my mom. She'd be so upset, she'd barely be able to breathe, let alone speak. I would answer the phone, but I would only hear sobbing and I would think it was a wrong number. "Poor crying lady," I would think, "how am I going to tell her she misdialed?" I would almost hang up to save us both from sadness, but then I would hear my mom's voice sure and clear saying, "he's dead."

I would fly home for the funeral and my girlfriend would come with me. I would be a pallbearer and carry my brother's body on my shoulder from the hearse to the grave, and everyone would be crying because he was such a great guy, and my girlfriend would hold my hand really hard and tell me that she loves me over and over again. My girlfriend would say "I love you" so many times that the words would break apart and dissolve into nonsense, into something like a secret code we composed so no one else would know what we mean.

I pretend that this is why I'm crying, because the other reason doesn't make sense to me. It really doesn't, and I know I'm not an asshole.

I lie down on the couch.

I pick up the remote and aim it at the television. I push one button, and our apartment goes quiet. I could say that our place is perfectly silent if it wasn't for the sound of my cat vomiting somewhere down the hall. ☺

Jennifer Krasinski lives and works in Los Angeles, California. She can be reached at jennifercatherinek@earthlink.net.

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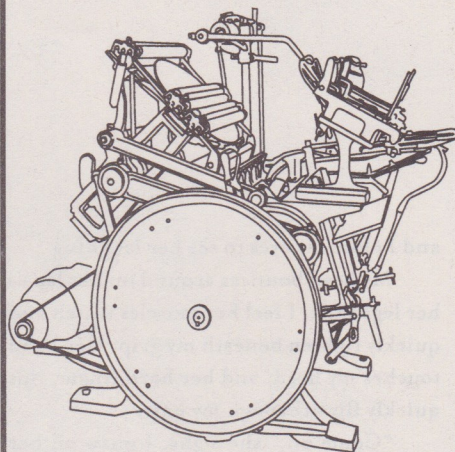
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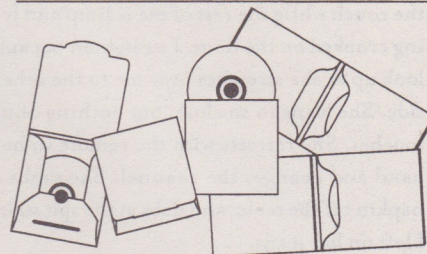
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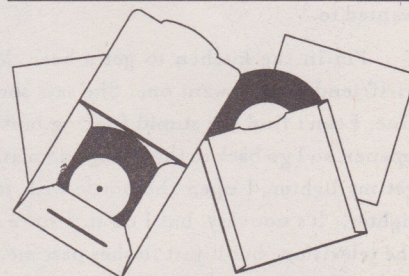
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Organize a Boycott

By Anne Elizabeth Moore

There seems to be a lot of confusion these days about certain revolutionary practices, and the efficacy of the boycott has suffered as a result. In the last couple of years, the boycott has become, well, sort of boring. Like the protest march, the boycott may have seemed necessary as a show of support, but christ, is it boring. *Hey, Hey, Ho Ho, The Boring Old Protest Marches of the '80s and '90s Have Got To Go*—and they did; in the last five years, groups like the Pink Bloque, Billionaires for Bush, and the Infernal Noise Brigade have brought a little fun back into the protest march, so maybe there's hope for the sad boycott, too.

Let's give the traditional boycott another think, and see where we can spruce it up a little, shall we?

The traditional boycott

The word came from some dude named Charles C Boycott, who was an Englishman living in Ireland as an estate agent for an absentee landlord. In 1880, Boycott evicted several tenants in a manner widely thought to be unfair, and his servants and community abandoned him at the urging of an Irish politician named Charles Parnell. Boycott's entire family was denied service in stores and didn't receive mail for the length of the treatment.

Boycotts are popularly seen as a way to coerce institutional change by withholding financial support. Because boycotts are rooted firmly in this notion of consumerism, boycott targets are most often corporations or the products of corporations. Targets may also be objectionable arms of the government, although this type of boycott is a bit more difficult to organize.

Traditional boycotts against products, companies, and government arms have won an enormous number of large-scale battles. A number of large corporations including PepsiCo, Eastman Kodak, IBM, Disney, and Texaco have responded to human rights group Free Burma Coalition-organized boycotts of their products by withdrawing business from Burma. ACT-UP's boycott of Phillip Morris' (now called the Altria Group) Marlboro cigarettes caused the company to withhold financial support from rabidly homophobic Senator Jesse Helms. And specific-product boycotts organized by three groups (the Boycott Shell Campaign, Educators Against Racism and Apartheid, and the Coke Divestment Campaign) prompted shareholder resolutions demanding divestment from South Africa, an act that initiated the abolition of apartheid in 1994. Remember that one? "The Blood of the People?" Even I participated in that one, although my crowd was exclusively drinking Diet Blood of the People at the time.

What works about traditional boycotts

The simplest steps of the traditional boycott are as follows: research both your reason for boycotting and the target of your boycott; decide on the boycott's objectives; communicate these ob-

jectives to both the company and fellow boycotters; put resources into place that will allow you to continue your boycott for the entire length of time you demand; make your demands specific and substantial but also realistic; and finally, get the support of everyone you know in your boycott, and sign petitions if you must (petitions also help remind participants of what they are boycotting and why).

Traditional boycotts work best when one single product can be identified as contributing directly to the problem you hope to resolve with your action. Marlboros, for example, were nearly miraculously tied to the vague notion of Jesse Helms' anti-gay blather and Coke became a direct, visceral symbol of apartheid.

Moreover, boycotts are most effective when it is clear from the outset what the reasons and terms for the boycott will be. Refusing to purchase AngelSoft toilet tissue until the company refuses to take that silly baby off the packaging may be an effective boycott; refusing to purchase AngelSoft because they suck will not be.

The secret to getting a boycott to work is understanding that, by boycotting a specific product, you will probably not change the income of the corporation that creates the product. Boycotts work because—as Charles C Boycott must have figured out fairly quickly—regular, everyday people lend their regular, everyday support to the effort. The targets of successful big-business boycotts express frustration over the loss of employee morale, or the difficulty of hiring new people.

So: research your potential target carefully, communicate it thoroughly, and think about how to widen the scope of your boycott beyond the purely financial.

The super-sexy new boycott

Boycotts are not just a refusal to purchase certain goods; that's not radical at all, that's just capitalism. Boycotts are the act of objecting to certain goods or acts by governments or businesses, and withholding support based on those objections. Seeing boycotts this way makes it a little easier to think about boycotts creatively; the act of creative objection should probably come first and foremost if you want to make any sort of stand at all.

Now, if you are really, really big—like, the Sierra Club big—a boycott threat is really all that's necessary to enforce change. But most of us are not that big, and perhaps this is one reason the boycott's been forgotten about of late. The key to making boycotts work, however, is still large numbers of people—and the key to getting large numbers of people involved in anything is the media. Including, as was proved during the massive RNC protests this summer, e-mail and text-messaging throughout wide varieties of diverse groups of people.

So, here's what we have so far in our visions of the new boycott style: creative objection, and masses of people. To me, it sounds like a party. ☺

www.boycotts.org wants to know about your boycotts, and so do we! E-mail anne@punkplanet.com.

DIY Sex EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

There is this guy I am totally crushed out on and he says he's asexual. I'm a chick and think that maybe he is just gay and doesn't want to tell me, or can't realize it himself. He has never had sex with anyone in the years that I have known him, but again, I think he may just be a latent gay boy. I mean, how could anyone not want to have sex with *no one*!

Signed,

Horn Puppy

Funny that I got this question because just last week, while hanging out at my favorite bar, I engaged in two separate conversations with two different people who both mentioned asexuality, something I usually think nothing about, as my life consists of selling dildos and vibrators to people who are sexually active. One of comments was just in passing, but the other was a guy who actually grabbed me by the arm, looked me straight in the eye and asked "But what do you know about asexuality? Can you tell me anything about asexuality?" He seemed almost desperate and I felt bad telling him I didn't really know anything about it, besides those amoeba things that can reproduce without a partner. So I did what any good American would do—Internet research—and guess what? Turns out, there is an asexual movement afoot and it's time that we sexual people educate ourselves.

Asexuality, when you are not talking about reproduction, means that a person has no sexual feelings for other people. I think most of us would have the knee-jerk reaction of thinking those people are just screwed up—latent queers or abuse survivors who are horrified by the prospect of sexual contact. And honestly, until about an hour ago, that is what I would have thought as well. But I did some reading and it turns out (according to a recent study by Brock University) that about one percent of adults have no interest in sex. Not just that they have no interest in their unkempt, lazy-ass lover of 20 years. We're talking a complete lack of desire for any kind of sexual contact with people of any gender. *Nada*. Not all people who consider themselves asexual lack all desire for physical contact, it's just the sexual/genital contact that they have no desire for. Many asexuals report enjoying and needing close contact and non-physical intimacy, but struggle with finding people to share that.

Let's be honest here: Most people find that at some point or another they want to get it on with another person, and to fall outside of that *huge* mainstream can be very difficult. For most of us, the desire to fuck is so ingrained that there are times we can't even control it. How many of us have had sexual desires that were "inappropriate" (i.e., your mom's best friend, your boyfriend's brother, your high-school teacher, that girl who was such a freakin' asshole but oh so sexy)? To hear of people who have zero sexual desire and are OK about that can seem so sad, so wrong. But then again, 30 years ago (and even still today in the Republican Party) no one could understand how anyone could possibly go against "nature" and be queer, so it is now up to us to open our minds a bit and think of asexuality as a valid sexual identity.

If you have found yourself thinking about this issue or want to read more about it there are a couple of active websites like asexuality.org and theofficialasexualsociety.com that are helping form a community for asexuals. With bulletin boards and serious FAQs, those asexuals who may have felt completely alone are finding a place to meet others like themselves.

But shit, I know someone is going to get pissed off by this and I'd burn at the stake if I said this about queers, but if you are asexual and unhappy about it, you don't have to just sign up and join the team. Unlike homosexuality, whose "cause" is still unknown, there are physical/emotional reasons why someone may have no desire for sex. Study after study has been done about hormone levels in women and how they relate to sex drive/libido. Women and men who have no sexual interest could possibly have a hormone imbalance. The company behind the wonder drug Viagra has just completed a study showing that a lack of testosterone in postmenopausal women can render them completely uninterested in sex. Obviously this study was done so that evil big drug companies can sell more drugs, but nevertheless, hormones are a very important part of our sex drive and it is crucial to realize that an imbalance can seriously affect libido. So if you are asexual and unhappy about it, talk to your doctor. If you are asexual and comfortable with that, then do what queers did in the '60s: Come out, start a rebellion and make "we're here, we're sexless, get used to it" a household anthem. ☺

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DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

Salt Peter

Cooking without salt is cooking without full flavor. I never realized this until salt was removed from my diet. After my grandfather had heart surgery, my grandmother removed salt from her cooking. Her once-savory stewed tomato sauce became bland—and saltless. This style of saltless cooking became the *de rigueur* cooking style of America as we were told that salt was bad for us. But flavoring our food with table salt was less the enemy than the high sodium content in manufactured foods, which adds extreme levels of sodium to our diets. As a result, all salt gets a bad rap.

Yet salt plays key roles in the cooking process. It affects gluten in the baking process by inhibiting yeast activity, which prevents the gluten from weakening. When added to water for boiling, it instantly reduces the freezing point and raises the boiling point. It has also been used as a method of preservation for centuries. And of course, salt is valuable in producing flavor—in fact, the body has a specific taste sensation for detecting it.

Salt is made up of 40 percent sodium and 60 percent chloride—a nearly pure source of two essential minerals—hence its scientific name, sodium chloride. It is an essential element for the body. Sodium and chloride are held together by ionic bonds and this structure serves to regulate the body's chemical concentration by osmosis. But in consuming large amounts of sodium, the body's adrenal glands and kidneys become stressed. The mineral balances cannot be controlled and too much water is drawn into the blood plasma, raising blood pressure and straining the heart and its vascular system. This would be the main cause of hypertension and the major reason we've been told to remove salt from our diets.

Today salt is an inexpensive, widely available product. But historically, salt has been a valuable commodity. In Roman times, soldiers were given a specific allowance to purchase salt, a *salarium*—the root of the word, “salary.” Salt was long considered a luxury item that was accessible only to the wealthy. In the Middle Ages trade routes developed, while it became a harvested product that could be monitored and in effect taxed by any given government. The French did just that, instituting the Gabelle tax in the 14th century. Individuals were obligated to purchase set amounts of salt from the monarch's supply annually at a fixed price. This tax helped launch the French Revolution. But salt became more plentiful, it became a reasonable option for purchasing and erased its high value.

There are many variations of salt:

- Rock salt comes from natural deposits in the ground formed by shrinking seas. It is mined by pumping water into the deposit where the brine is pumped to the surface and heated until it evaporates. It has a grayish color with less refinement than other salts. It retains more minerals and impurities, which are harmless to ingest. Main-

ly available in large crystal form, this is the type of salt that is combined with ice to make ice cream in a crank-style machine.

- Sea salt comes from salt marshes, or basins where seawater is trapped and evaporates from sun and wind. Inland seas, like the Dead or Red Seas, also naturally produce sea salt due to a higher-than-normal salt content. It is a grayish color and contains other trace minerals, like calcium, magnesium, potassium, and bromides. It is the most costly of all salt harvesting processes. It is available in a fine grain, or in larger crystals.

- Table salt is a chemically purified result of this process, with additives to prevent moisture absorption. This form is also finely ground to make it free-flowing for use in cooking.

- Iodized salt is the same form with the addition of iodine. The addition of .01 percent of iodine is a 1924 American invention that was initially tested in Michigan after discovering that insufficient iodine causes goiter, a chronic illness in America since the beginning of the 20th century.

- Kosher salt is additive-free and coarse-grained.

- Pickling salt is fine-grained and used to make brines for pickled products, like sauerkraut. It is additive-free, which would create cloudy brine.

- Sour salt or citric salt is an extract from acidic fruits, like lemons and used to add tartness to certain dishes.

Vegetable bouillon

1/2-pound parsley

1/2-pound onions

1/2-pound leeks

1/2-pound carrots

1/2-pound celery

1/2-pound Swiss chard

1/2-pound salt

Chop the parsley and vegetables finely. Mix them with the salt. Put the mixture in a jar and make sure it's closed airtight. It will keep over a year if stored in a cool and dark place. Add one or two tablespoons to soups and stews as you would in making stock.

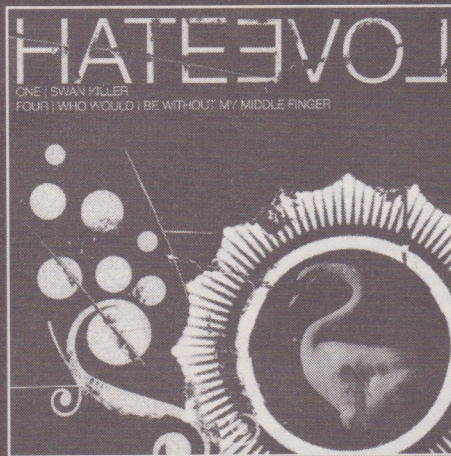
It is estimated that the average American consumes six to 15 grams of salt per day, supplying nearly 20 times the required amount for the body. The body's sodium intake is not only from condiment form, it is also an additive in many food products. Baking soda, meats, eggs, and some vegetables naturally contain sodium.

Salt also acts as a preserving agent. Highly concentrated salt solutions draw water out of bacteria and mold cells, inhibiting their growth. Valuable to the preservation of food, highly concentrated salt solutions draw water out of bacteria and mold cells, inhibiting their growth. At one time salt was used to preserve meat, fish, and butter. Some foods are still salt preserved, but some disadvantages may have led to the use of more commercial forms of preservation. Any salted food must have the salt soaked from it before consuming, so it loses some of its nutrients. And if not enough salt is removed, the body risks higher levels of sodium intake. Even though we don't have to rely on salting for preservation anymore, it has its merits. Here's one delicious salt-preserved recipe that can be immensely helpful in the kitchen. ©

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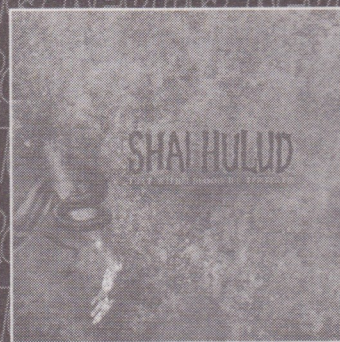


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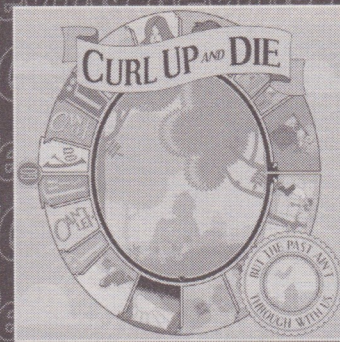
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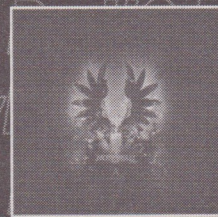
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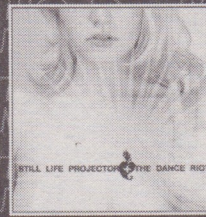
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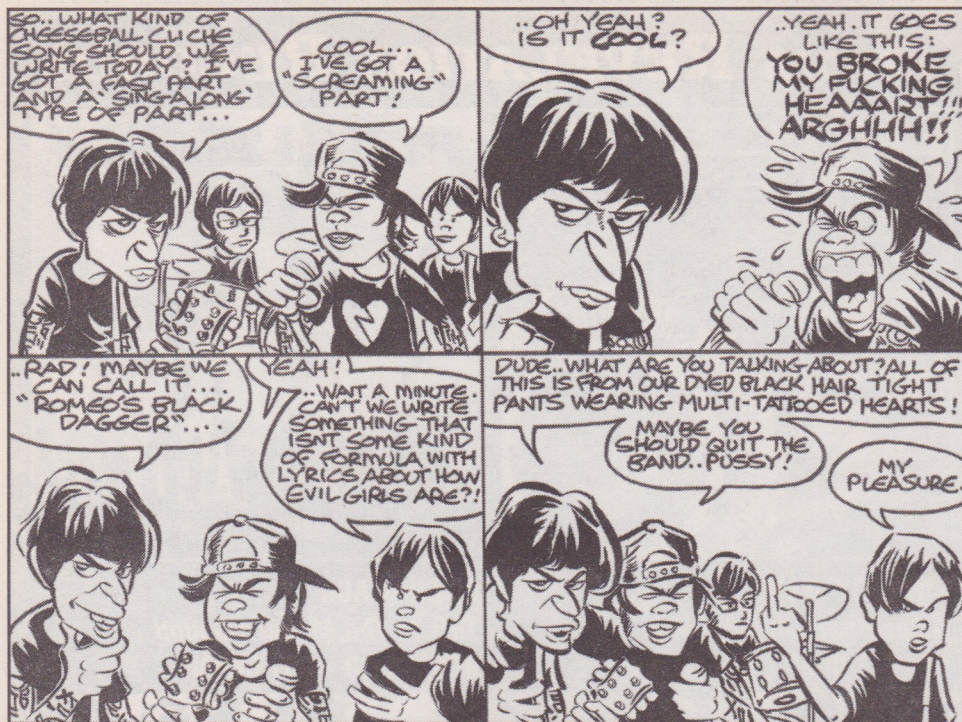
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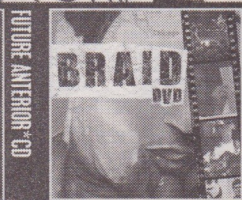
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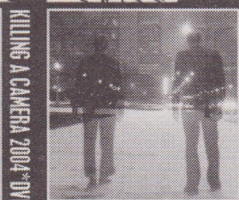
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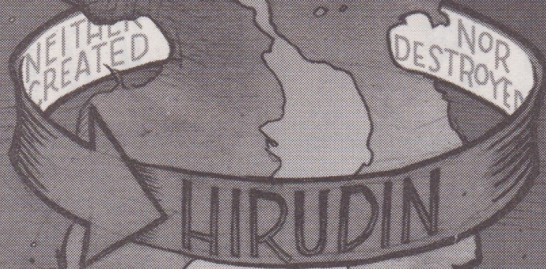
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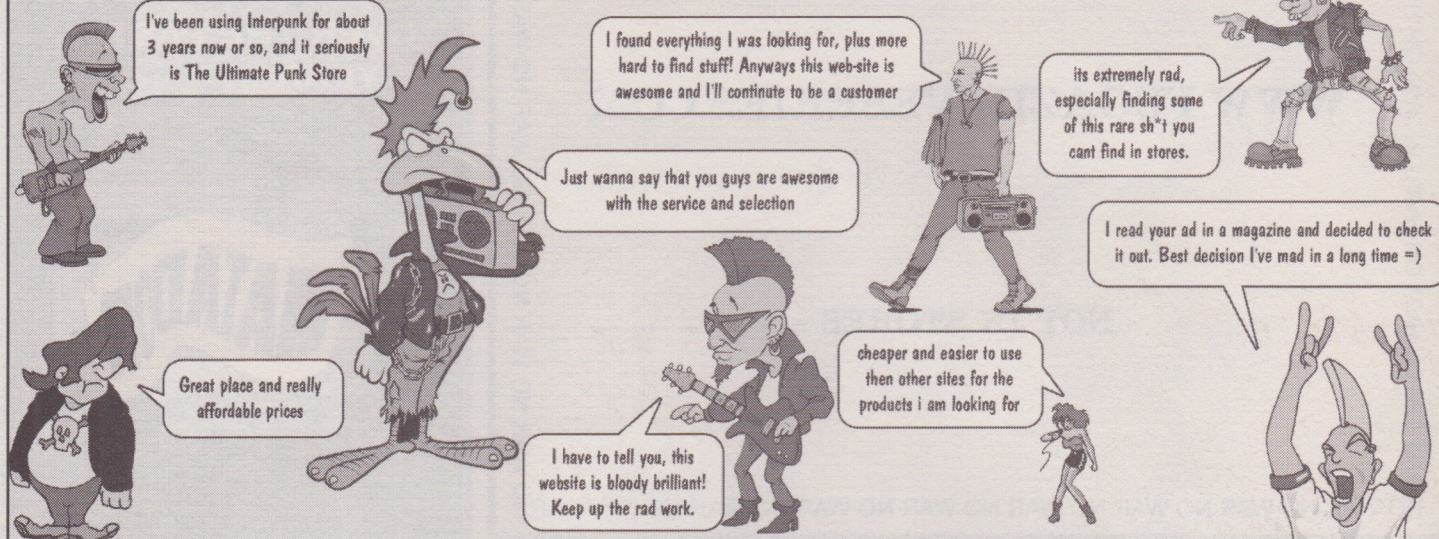
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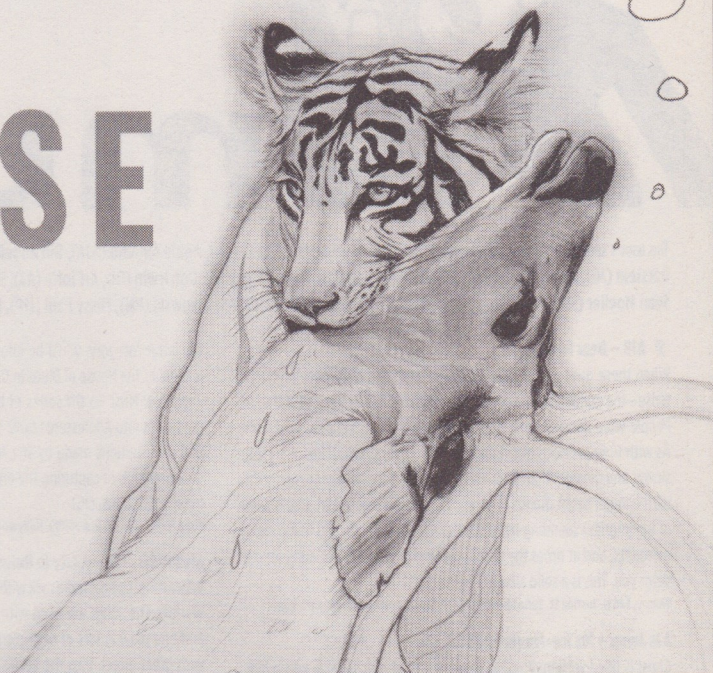
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🎧 **A18 – Dear Furious, CD**

When these guys played Milwaukee last summer, they were pretty intense—the guitar player was bleeding from his face at the end of the set. People were dancing hard. I really enjoyed it from my spot in the back. As with their previous effort on Victory, *Foreverafternothing*, it's a little slower and moshier than their early stuff. The songs combine catchy riffs with enough shout-alongs to keep this reviewer interested. This is some of the angriest sounding hardcore I've heard. There were a few cringing moments, and at times the vocals get kind of rap-like. But don't let that deter you. This is a solid album. (DA)

Victory, 346 N. Justine St. Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

A Is Jump – My Ice-Fingered Ghost, CD

Ghost is filled with mellow indie rock a hint of psychedelia, which lacks energy. The band tries to build up the songs with synthesizers, but it never goes anywhere. There's a pulse on the more upbeat tracks, like "Wait-ed So Long" and "Cursing The Green Wave," but it's not enough. (MP)

Future Apple Tree, PO Box 191, Davenport, IA 52808, www.futureappletree.com

Aa – S/T, 12"

What we have here is a one-sided slab of white vinyl containing some of the freakiest shit I've heard. Imagine Japanese schoolgirls shrieking inaudibly over experimental melodies combining tribal drums, Nintendo sound effects and electronica. Disturbing, hypnotic and alluring all at once. (BN)

Narnack, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

About The Fire – Rites Of Passage, CD

These guys play driving, melodic punk along the lines of Samiam, except with more of a hardcore edge. The guitars are big and chunky, and the vocals are powerful and gruff. Other than the occasional scream, you can expect some no-frills rock with a lot of power and melody. (NS)

HCNL, PO Box 36997, Indianapolis, IN 46236, www.hcnl.com

Action Action – Don't Cut Your Fabric To This Year's Fashion, CD

Formerly of The Reunion Show, Mark Thomas Kluepfel's Action Action is stuck in Cure-revival mode à la The Faint and The Rapture. Honestly, this guy sounds so self-obsessed that it's amazing he found three dudes to play with him. *Don't Cut* isn't the worst thing ever, but it does sound pretty self-involved. (JG)

Victory, 346 N. Justine Street, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Adicts, The – Rollercoaster, CD

I think this band has been around for a long time. They have a '77 punk sound (that I like), and the songs are well written and somewhat poppy, but with enough power to avoid getting sappy. They seem to like wearing outfits, if you care. (JJG)

SOS Records, www.sosrecords.us

🎧 **Adolescents, The – Live At The House Of Blues, CD/DVD**

Some of us are fans of The Adolescents; others are not. Even if you're in

the latter category, you'd be into this CD/DVD of The Adolescents playing live at the House of Blues in Orange County. Part of Kung Fu Records *The Show Must Go Off* series of live shows, this set will easily convert naysayers into Adolescents fans. You can't deny the historical relevance and contributions made by The Adolescents, and both the CD and DVD do a great job of capturing the energy and punk spirit that have helped make them icons. (JG)

Kung Fu Records, PO Box 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

Alexander, The – A City In Ruins, CD

Interesting, upbeat indie rock with quirky guitar parts—sort of Jimmy Eat Worldy. The songs are filled with great dual guitar parts, one rhythmic and one playing lots of high-pitched notes that cut through the songs with great effect. Plus the vocals are tuneful and melodic without being wimpy. (NS)

Self-released, www.thealexander.com

Alison Ranger – Formula Imperative, CD

I really like the music on the CD. It sounds kinda like Stereolab or something John McIntire would be doing: spacey keyboards and tape loops with guitar and strings. My one problem is with the dual vocals; they're a little too dramatic and "emo sounding." (DI)

Creep Music, 252 East Market St., West Chester, PA 19382, www.creeprecords.com

All Else Failed – This Never Happened, CD

Straight-forward hardcore with one singer and not a lot of metal—no flashy metal guitar riffs, but some double-bass kicks. AEF doesn't present anything new, but this CD is really solid. Throw in a couple emo songs, and you've got this record. Well orchestrated and reminiscent of passionate old-school hardcore. (EH)

Abacus 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne CA 90250, www.abacusrecordings.com

Already Dead – This Was Never Yours, CD

Metallic hardcore with screamy, midrange vocals. AD Doesn't stray away from the hardcore/metal formula at all, remaining totally typical generic metal hardcore. No need to pick up this CD; just go to your local hardcore show, and I'm sure you'll see the exact same band. Mediocre at best. (EH)

High Fidelity, PO Box 1071, Grover Beach, CA 93483, www.highfidelityrecords.com

🎧 **Amanda Woodward – La Decadence De La Decadence, CD**

Yes! Ever since I reviewed their *Ultramort* CD, I've been in love with this French hardcore band, and luckily I've gotten every release they've put out since then in my review box. With each release, their style of screamy, emotive hardcore progresses more and more, and this is certainly no exception. The songs on *La Decadence* feel much more structured compared to their previous output. You can tell the guys put more thought into the songs and spent more time in the studio. The sound is a bit more cleaned up without being clean; there's still plenty of distortion and screaming. Actually, this record really reminds me of the last Yage record. European punks have got the scream

sound on lock-down, so if you're a fan of the genre, you really can't go wrong with this record. (KM)

Level-Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

American Princess – Little Spaces, CD

Another great CD from this Little Rock, AK, band: a pop record with amazing lyrics, guitars and vocals. Trying to pinpoint their musical influences or compressions is hard, but every song here is radio ready in a refreshing way. (DI)

Max Recording, 1109 North Tyler, Little Rock, AR 72205, www.maxrecordings.com

Amps II Eleven – S/T, CD

Balls to the wall rock 'n' roll outta Cleveland, AZE are straight-forward and aggressive. They listed MCS, Pagans, Stooges and Motorhead as their influences, so that should explain it all. Grow your hair out and drink a 12-pack of Pabst, and you'll be ready for this. (TK)

Smog Veil Records, 550 W. Plumb Ln #B501, Reno, NV 89509, www.smogveil.com

Anadivine – Zoo, CD

Effortlessly negotiating the edges of indie rock and post-punk, Anadivine's latest full-length will surely please the masses of indie fanatics out there. At times it may seem the sound stretches a bit thin, but the sudden bursts of energy quickly end such thoughts and bring through the varied influences. (BN)

The Militia Group, 1215 N Red Gum, Suite L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themilitiagroup.com

Anger Regiment – Aces And Eights, CDEP

Wow, I can't remember the last time I liked something that Bridge 9 released (probably the *Holding On* album). The intro was pretty rocking in an RNR kind of way, and the rest is pretty tough-sounding NYHC, but without any major metal influence. Surprisingly, I think this is quite good. (DA)

Bridge 9 Records, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

🎧 **Another Blue Door – Haulers, CD**

Canada's Another Blue Door definitely has studied its Wilco records, and the smoky seven-minute opening track is certainly a better take on Jeff Tweedy than Ryan Adams has ever managed. This is a nicely melodic first effort, highlighted by the road-trip riffs of "American Guitars," the slow-build of "Ithaca, N.Y." and the drunk-driving missive of "Christmas '98." Singer Dave Schoonderbeek sounds as if he's running solely on coffee. He channels the slacker-cool of the early '90s, which sometimes makes *Haulers* feel like a lost Pavement record. (TM)

Stinky, 511 Avenue of the Americas, #153, New York, NY 10011, www.stinkyrecords.com

Another Breath – Not Now, Not Ever, CD

Good, straight-forward hardcore that had me longing for the days when The Hope Conspiracy were still good. Song explanations round out a solid release that realizes it's not breaking any new ground and doesn't pretend like it is. It's refreshing to hear a good, honest hardcore record now and then. (DH)

Rival Records, PO Box 5242, Concord, CA 94524, www.rivalrecords.net

A.O.S. / Human Waste – split, 7"

Being that this is the first new 7" that Profane Existence has put out since 1998, you'd better believe it's gonna live up to your crusty expectations. Human Waste from Sweden and AOS from Connecticut play similar-sounding, political crust punk. Nothing innovative, but it should get you off your butt. (TK) Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profaneeexistence.com

Ape House – Tired Of Style, CD

I'm tired of style as well, so records like this one are like a nice diamond in the rough. Just some good, old fashioned, catchy power-pop gems to relax to in the midst of all these electrobeats and post-punk rip-offs. Nice. (MG) Self-released, www.apehouserock.com

☛ Arcade Fire, The – Funeral, CD

Hailing as transplants from the frostbitten city of Montreal, The Arcade Fire's musical traits stem eastward, showing all the tell-tale signs of British heritage. Using textured string orchestrations and sultry dynamics, the predictable, swooning vocals and disco-laden drum tracks are presented with a level of sophistication rarely found in the genre. Singers Win Butler and Regine Chassagne deliver their drama with conviction and intelligence; their family-themed life-and-death lyrical scheme is tastefully echoed by the pushes and pulls of the band's operatic movements. Alas, the pale-faced poster children of sex, drugs and retro wave have been graced by worthwhile modern royalty. Finally, the sound so many of us hate to love can be embraced without regret. (BM) Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

☛ Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti – The Doldrums, CD

There is a point where art rock ends and total crap begins, and this album crosses that line. It sounds like elevator music gone bad, and at times it sounds like creepy, muffled a.m. soft rock. Other times it sounds like a warped vinyl record. The spacey, distorted vocals add another layer to the 18 different things going on at once on all of these tracks. Unlike anything I have ever heard, but not in a good way. (EH) Paw Tracks, PO Box 20368, New York, NY 10009, www.paw-tracks.com

Arkham – The Freak Power Candidate, CD

Arkham are an incredibly intriguing band, playing math rock with faint similarities to Fugazi. The music is dynamic with guitars sometimes playing quiet, acoustic interludes and other times playing heavy sludge rock like it was produced by Butch Vig. Vocals range from melodic to totally screaming. (SJ) Volcom, 1740 Monrovia Ave., Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.volcomentertainment.com

Armedlite Rifles – S/T, 7"

'77-style revival band in the good taste of Stiff Little Fingers, The Jam and an occasional Gang Of Four rhythm section (see closely resembled name). A bit mediocre, with none of the amiable abrasiveness of derivative bands like Swingin' Utters or the sucrose-enriched pop of The Exploding Hearts. (RL) Wrinky Dink Records / self-released, 72 Johns Estate Road, Pine Bush, NY 12566

Athletic Automation / Made In Mexico – split, CDEP

Athletic Automation uses a distorted lap-steel guitar to create repetitive rhythms that build you up and bring you down. Made In Mexico (featuring both Arab On Radar guitarists) has high-pitched screaming with spastic, incongruous drums and guitars. Plenty of freak-outs and noise. Great. (EH) New Addition, PO Box 81162, Pittsburgh, PA 15217, newadditionmedia@hotmail.com

Atreyu – The Curse, CD

Atreyu plays glossy, mass-marketable, predictable hardcore, including a metal-emo fusion with screaming/singing cliché lyrics. Although not bad for what it is, it just follows a formula. This record is put together well, and Atreyu fans should be stoked, but I wouldn't call it good. (EH) Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Autoparty – Lumlight, CD

Autoparty vocalist Christopher Gerozissis is the reincarnate of '60s French sex-popper Serge Gainsbourg, and Autoparty's minimalist electronic beats nicely highlight his silk-smooth delivery. (JG) Lumlight Records / self-released, autoparty@aol.com

Autumn Falling – In Hiding, CD

Acoustic guitar. Violin. Girl and boy singing, but mostly just the boy whining about love and girls with asinine lines like, "I wish I could come home to see your face / it's something I know I just can't erase / rewind and play it back / but don't forget to cut out all the tears." (AA) ECA Records, 35 Wright St., First Floor, Weymouth, MA 02190, www.ecarecords.com

Backdoor Men – Mohawk Comover, CD

Cleveland's Backdoor Men were some late-'70s also-rans who have reformed in 2004 to be overlooked one more time. It's passable if not remarkable garage-punk with the best moments ("Not Fed Up With You Yet") featuring some slinky organ and the worst moments ("Fuck The French") veering dangerously close to novelty-song territory. (JC) Handsome Productions, www.handsomeproductions.com

Bafabegiya / Arabella – split, 7"

Arabella are from Reno and play herky-jerky post-hardcore with guy/girl screaming. Bafabegiya are ex-Crucial Attack & ex-This Computer Kills and play more straightforward HC with mosh parts. I'd probably enjoy both of these bands a lot more to see them in a sweaty basement than hear them on my turntable. (JC) Spacement Records, 5120 Idlebury Way, Reno NV 89523, www.spacementreno.com

Bambix – What's In A Name, CD

Progressive punk rock that tip-toes through melodic pop and metallic hardcore with ease. Bambix are from the Netherlands, and the fact that they've been around for a long time is evident in both their musicianship and their complex-yet-catchy songwriting. Cool. (JC) Daemon Records, PO Box 1207, Decatur, GA 30031, www.daemonrecords.com

Baroness – First, CD

Crusty-sounding stoner metal. I'm more stoner rock than stoner metal, so I can't really compare this to any certain band. Two of the songs top six minutes, but they keep you interested. Dude, Bill and Ted would totally air guitar to this. (DA) Hyperrealist, PO Box 9313, Savannah, GA 31412, www.hyperrealist.com

Beakers – Four Steps Toward A Cultural Revolution, CD

This CD is a collection of unreleased and out-of-print songs by the early '80s Seattle band. Deeply rooted in ska and funk, Beakers want to rock you and make you dance. With the bouncy grooves and soaring sax, they can certainly do both. (MP) K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecords.com

Beans – Shock City Maverick, CD

Meh. The second solo record from this Anti-Pop Consortium veteran embraces an old-school feel with its beats and minimal musical accompaniment. Beans crams a lot of words into his flow, which occasionally works, but often sounds awkward. Add in the usual posturing against other MCs, blah blah blah, and it just gets boring. (KR) Warp Records, www.warprecords.com

☛ Beep Beep – Business Casual, CD

Being an avid fan of everything Saddle Creek, I was severely disappointed at how resoundingly average Business Casual turned out to be. Taking cues from the hyperactive, freakout antics of such bands as Wire, The Blood Brothers and Arab On Radar (most notably on "Giggle Giggle"), Beep Beep have created a likable dance-punk record that

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winds up falling flat due to its adherence to all of the current post-punk/no wave norms. Business Casual very well might have been able to make a resounding mark two or three years ago, but coming in at this stage in the game, it fails to distinguish itself from the hundreds of bands in this saturated market. Certainly enjoyable at points, it's ultimately a fleeting and disposable listen. (MS)
Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554 Omaha, NE 68108, www.saddle-creek.com

Bensin – Leave Your Mark, CD

Eventually pop-punk isn't for you anymore. Maybe you can't relate to missing a girl while you're on tour. All the Starting Lines and New Found Glories share the same bark. Here you have the synths and the pathetically dopey unrequited love songs all over again. (SM)
Search and Rescue Records, PO Box 8260, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, www.searchandrescue-records.com

Biff Tannen / Pilger – split, 7"

Two street-punk bands are on this 7", and they sound almost exactly the same. Short, fast, politically charged punk songs with sing-along chants and three chords. All this record has to offer is typical, unexciting street punk. (EH)
SD Records, PO Box 295, South Hampton, 5017 ILW, UK, www.suspectdevicehq.co.uk

Big Buildings – Hang Together For All Time, CD

Big Buildings may not be virtuosos on their instruments. They may not write the most intense or original music in the world. And they may not sing on pitch, even 50 percent of the time. But these four Chicagoans have grit and soul coming outta their wazoos. They've managed to capture the sound of four pals jamming out on roots rock with no concern for trends, hype or reward. These fellas play rock 'n' roll for the sheer camaraderie of creating music and being in a band with people they care deeply about. "We Are Steamships," "Trash Out," "Block By Block" and just about every other cut on the album are the type of good-time rockers that'll put a grin on your face and get your feet moving. This is the antithesis to all the moody, Cure-inspired stuff that seems to be popular these days. Big Buildings are too busy rockin' out to be depressed. (AJ)
Stars/No Stars Records, PO Box 577185, Chicago, IL 60657, www.starsnostars.com

Bilge Pump – Let Me Breathe, CD

With weird time signatures, jagged and atonal guitar notes, and spoken/sung vocals, this is what I guess they call "art punk." In a way, it reminds me of Huggy Bear, but way more complex. It sounds different while remaining interesting and groovable. I like it. (KM)
Gringo Records, PO Box 7546, Nottingham, NG2 4WT, UK, www.gringorecords.com

Black Box – Colors, 7"

Political punk rock that really feels like you could tear up some curbs on your board with this playing in the background. Mine came with a CD of what I'm

guessing is everything that they've recorded thus far, which was cool. (DH)
Laidoff/Del Ninos Records, PO Box 2954, Petaluma, CA 94953-2954 www.laidoffrecords.com

Black Friday '29 – The Escape, CD

Chugging metal-like guitars, throaty, screamed vocals, fast and straight forward songs—hardcore, no?
GSR Music, Spekstraat 44, 6223 BM Maastricht, The Netherlands, www.gsrmusic.com

Black Square – End The Cycle, CD

Playing reggae-influenced rock is a tricky thing to do. The Clash was kind of hit or miss with their attempts, the Stones were mostly miss, and 311 is just embarrassing. These dudes are better at it than 311, but not by much. The simplistic political lyrics don't help either. (AJ)
Sound House Records / self-released, www.myspace.com/blacksquare

Blackouts – History In Reverse, CD

History In Reverse is an anthology of the songs from this influential Seattle band. While obviously drawing from Joy Division and Bauhaus, they add their own touch and end up with a precursor to industrial rock, with abrasive drums and chunky bass lines. Any Ministry fan should check this out. (MP)
K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecords.com

Blake, Shelly – 1995-2005 Volume 1, CD

A singer/songwriter who redefines lo-fi, Shelly Blake plays in the style of Nick Drake and Syd Barrett, but with dissimilar results. Awkward and flawed, this record doesn't have all that much to offer. (RL)
Self-released, www.shellyblake.com

Blasmat – Chopping Block, CDEP

This record is typical hardcore punk with a sprinkle of metal. With songs like "DUI" and "Freedom Or War," you can probably guess what it sounds like: repetitive music with deep, biting vocals and the same drumbeats throughout. Boring. (EH)
Dagger Records / self-released, PO Box 380152, East Hartford, CT 06138, www.blasmat.freesevers.com

Blatant Finger – Moving Forward, CD

It's always cool when you come across an awesome band that you've never heard of before. From the opening guitar part of their first song, I knew I was going to like these guys. Blatant Finger play strong, melodic punk that instantly conjures up memories of bands like MIA, Naked Raygun, Kraut, The Freeze and a multitude of classic SoCal punk bands. You can expect instantly memorable melodies and meaty punk hooks. The singer has a deep, husky voice that bellows out tuneless anthems about drinking, relationships and the like. On some songs, they get into Social D.'s punkabilly territory, but not quite as countrified or dramatic. For the most part, this is straight-forward, balls-out punk rock that's immediately engaging and fun. (NS)
Pelado, 521 W. Wilson #C-103, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.peladorecords.com

Blood Spit Nights – Complete, CD

This reminds me of Japanese hardcore. I loved the insane vocals that range from screaming to growling. When I first listened to this, I prayed for some blast beats that sadly never appeared. A fun listen, but it lacks some of the intensity that might have put them over the top. (KM)
Hardcore Holocaust, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Bloodthirsty Lovers – The Delicate Seam, CD

Fuzzy, lush indie rock with some synth beats and the occasional odd noise or instrument in the background. I also hear some '60s Beatles-esque moments that fit together well with the singer's dreamy delivery. Brings to mind old Built To Spill, only with a little more kick. (NS)
French Kiss Records, Ste. 229, 111 E. 14th St., New York, NY 10003, www.frenchkissrecords.com

Blowback – Lies, CDEP

This sounds a lot like early Black Flag, but an updated version with lyrics about the war in Iraq and Enron. Seven songs of early political hardcore that had a good message, but musically left something to be desired. (KM)
Self-released, www.blowback.org

Blue Velvet – Obsessive / Compulsive, CD

A five-piece experimental instrumental act from New York composed of two guitarists, two percussionists and a cellist. Pretty at times—a twinkling guitar plays give-and-take with a triangle on "Nursery Rhyme"—but these cuts play more like essays than songs. (TM)
BC Records, 45 Lincoln Ave., Tuckahoe, NY 10707, www.bcrecs.com

Blue Velvet – Opening Music, CDEP

I wonder if they're named after the movie. Blue Velvet provide some exploratory instrumentals with a couple guitarists, two percussionists and a cellist that adds a nice element. Much of it is quite good, particularly the noisier parts, though a few portions can drag on too long. (BA)
BC Records, 45 Lincoln Ave., Tuckahoe, NY 10707, www.bcrecs.com

Blueprint – Chamber Music, CD

(This is a review of the new Blueprint record) I really like Blueprint and the work that he's done with (This is a review of the new Blueprint record) such folks as Aesop Rock and Soul Position, but this is (This is a review of the new Blueprint record) definitely an interesting turn. *Chamber Music* only has its roots in hip-hop when (This is a review of the new Blueprint record) it comes to some of the beats, because other than that, the music is a mixture of varying sounds not (This is a review of the new Blueprint record) traditional to hip-hop. Some might even categorize this as a form of trip hop (shudder), but I would rather think that Blueprint is (This is a review of the new Blueprint record) pushing the envelope, showing that a genre many have tagged as being stagnant can still be expanded upon. Then again, it's hard to get a (This is a review of the new Blueprint record) really good feel for a record when there's a prerecorded anti-bootleg message (This is a review of

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adayzie (AA)

The Starvations, Blackout to Remember. At I write this, summer is slowly slipping out of my firm grasp, and I'm already missing its cool nights and cool beers. Then I find myself at a punk club, nestled in an anonymous back alley in downtown Los Angeles, complaining about the current state of music and how nothing makes me feel anymore. I'm losing faith, losing summer and losing myself when suddenly The Starvations play their first chord onstage and knock me on my pansy ass, drowning me in their misery via blues-tinged roots rock. Gabe Hart, the frontman with the messy hair and breath heavy with liquor, spits out songs like he's held them in for years. His moody guitar strums the fine line between melancholy ("Curse Of The Loner," "Whore Love") and mania ("Girl Of Stone," "Church Of The Doublecross"). They've been compared to The Gun Club and The Pogues, for infusing punk and roots, but The Starvations' sound is undeniably their own, with Hart's haunting vocals, Jean-Paul Garnier's throbbing bass lines, jangly guitars courtesy of Ryan Hertz, and Ian Harrower pounds out beats that'll shuffle your feet. Who could have imagined that anything with so much soul could sprout out of the concrete landscape of Los Angeles?

LA Bands that'll shake your drunken ass: The Mormons, The Red Onions, The Sharp Ease and Bananarchy.

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Agacki (DA)

Chain Of Strength, The One Thing That Still Holds True. Growing up in a small town, I never had a straightedge friend. Once I started going to shows, I met a straightedge band from my area. In an e-mail, one of the band members asked if I had heard Chain Of Strength. When I said I hadn't he stopped returning my e-mails. Whenever I listen to this CD, it makes me think of that guy. He broke edge awhile back, but I'm still holding strong. It's funny how these things work. Besides Uniform Choice, Chain Of Strength were one of the best bands at writing sensitive-guy hardcore. I'll admit the lyrics get a little cheesy, but that's all negated by the fact that they wrote the straight-edge anthem "True Till Death." Of all the youth-crew bands of the late '80s, Chain Of Strength sticks out to me. They were more interesting musically and less annoying vocally than most of the bands of their time. I definitely feel that Chain Of Strength is a genre-defining band. Has the edge gone dull?

Can't stop the rock: I Farm, *Sincerely Robots*; Iron Lung, *Life. Iron Lung. Death*; Kamikaze, *Seppuku*; Government Issue, *First Demo*; Monsula, *Nickel EP*.

the new Blueprint record) every so often. (This is a review of the new Blueprint record). (DH)

Weightless Recordings, 5837 Karrick Square Drive, #287, Dublin, OH 43017, www.weightless.net

Bomb Squadron – Another Generation Found, CD

Another one of those old-school punk-rock bands with fake British vocals, influenced by the Sex Pistols or somebody, with song titles like “Religion Is A Fraud” and lyrics about how the police oppress punks. Old hat as far as the style goes, but some of the lyrics were funny. (KM)

Doppelganger, 803 Saint John St., Allentown, PA 18103, www.doppelgangerrecords.com

☎ Bones, The – Straight Flush Ghetto, CD

The write-up accompanying this CD trumpets how The Bones, a “punk ‘n’ roll” band, are going to be the next big thing—yet they don’t deliver anything compelling with this CD. In addition to the dull, unmemorable music, the singer has that gravelly, “I gargle broken glass” sound. But there is no real soul or emotion to his voice, and the lyrics seem silly and clichéd, such as these snippets from songs: “tear it down,” “final battle” “my kingdom for a six pack” and “it’s party time.” (JGG)

Liquor and Poker Music, 2323 S. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250

Bonk – Western Soul, CD

Dancey Norwegian electric funk/punk with distorted vocals and heavy bass. Punk rock is at its core, but mixed with some pop, Motown and a little gospel. With so many elements, this band really defies genre and is anything from typical. Energetic, raw and electrifying. (EH)

Racing Junior, Brugata 3a, N-0189 Oslo, Norway, www.racingjunior.com

Bookmobile – Keys, CD

Keys is experimental electronic music created by two guys from Seattle who merge some pleasant melodies with electronic blips and bleeps. On occasion, they lose sight of the melody, causing the music to become tiresome, but most of it is a decent listen. (SJ)

Woodson Lateral Records, 2112 S. Spokane St., Seattle, WA 98144, www.woodsonlateral.com

☎ Botox Aftermath – The First Casualty Of War, CD

Old-style hardcore punk that is saved from sounding like all the other bands of the genre by having memorable guitar hooks and intelligent lyrics. The words are political, bringing to mind The Clash and the Dead Kennedys, but are pertinent to right now. I like the fact that a song was done about the WTO riots “Live From Seattle.” There are also lots of anti-Bush jabs that warmed the cockles of my heart. (JGG)

Self-released, www.geocities.com/botoxboys

Boxer Rebellion – S/T, CD

Slickly produced, Bad Brains rip-off punk. Their “holier than thou” attitude is so high school Amnesty International Club. It takes true talent to write political anthems that really resonate and don’t come off as contrived. These dudes do not possess such skill. (AJ)

Creep Records, PMB 220, 252 East Market St., West Chester, PA 19382, www.creeprecords.com

Brahm – Built To Be Brought Down, CD

Brahm is the front for Chaz Barber, who creates electronic and often symphonic pieces in a dark, brooding feel with sharp techno drums. The vocals, when present, often consist of some hoarse screams. It’s most creative on the quieter pieces, but many songs consist of long excursions on the same riff. (BA)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Dr., Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Break It Up – ST, CDEP

Fast to midpaced hardcore, more like later Ripcord than YOT. Well-developed hardcore songs that are more interesting than a lot of modern hardcore bands that rely on mandatory mosh parts or unmemorable, lightning-fast songs. I like that the singer actually sings instead of just screaming the whole time too. (NS)

Anger Management, Nijvelsebaan 161, 3060 Korbeek-dijle, Belgium, www.breakitup.co.uk

Breather Resist – Charmer, CD

A somewhat interesting take on hardcore, a little more along the lines of Botch or Dillinger Escape Plan, but not as tech. Lots of weird time changes and arty guitar parts interspersed with a good dose of heavy, seething metalcore. A bit more than your typical mosh metal. (MG)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetreec.com

Brill, Paul – New Pagan Love Song, CD

This is captivating, moody singer-songwriter stuff carried by electronic beats instead of guitar and crooning vocals. Brill calls it “electricana.” Mellow, melodic and pretty, this record uses a lot of instruments, such as violin, bass, electric guitar and piano, and arranges them well. Fans of mellow, spacey stuff will dig it. (EH)

Scarlet Shame Records, PO Box 20680, Park West Station, New York, NY 10025, www.scarletshamerecords.com

Broadie, Karl – Nowhere Now Here, CD

On his respectable debut, Karl Broadie gives us an album of meandering folk/alt-country songs. Broadie’s twanged vocals flow flawlessly as a talented backing band fills these songs with banjos, fiddles and mandolin. “Paperback Book,” “Keep Me On Your Mind,” and “If Not For You” are highlights. (MP)

Laughing Outlaw, 8 Victoria St., Lewisham 2049, Australia, www.laughingoutlaw.com.au

☎ Bugs Eat Books—Ghosts Of Leaves, CD

These guys sound like the type of band that the angst, moody, indie-rock kid at your high school might have been in. You know, the one whose Lemonheads *Lick* tee was 12 sizes too big and who constantly wandered around with his Walkman plugged in. Chances are that kid makes more money than you these days, as a computer programmer or something. And he’d probably be into Bugs Eat Books in at least a nostalgic way, because they remind him of him, only ten years ago. (JG)

Happy Happy Birthday to Me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, www.HHBTM.com

Bullets And Octane – The Revelry, CD

This Orange County melodic rock with a punk edge produced by Gilby Clarke (of Guns N’ Roses) sounds exactly like you’d expect it to. A pretty decent listen with some nice melodies, LA rocker-dude vocals and blazing guitar solo-type things, but sorely lacking in the creativity department. (KM)

Criterion Records, 12862 Joy St., Ste. D, Garden Grove, CA 92840, www.criterionrecords.com

Burnin’ Thousands – What’s Destined Shall Be, CD

Fucking horrid, off-key vocals whine over painfully slow alternative rock post-hardcore riffs. Distinguishably bad, but professionally executed, this awful album probably has major commercial potential. Popular music doesn’t get much worse than this thankfully short mess of an album. (AE)

Zero Velocity Records, 609 Belgian Dr., Bear, DE 19701, www.zeroveLOCITYrecords.com

Burning Skies – Murder By Means Of Existence, CD

Thrash-metal with lots of unnecessary double-bass drum work and cool vocals. I had mixed feelings on this one because there are some really sweet riffs and screams, but the whole feel of the record is totally flat. It’s like they mixed the thing with earplugs in. More volume, please! (DH)

Lifeforce Records, www.lifeforcec.com

Butler, Brandon L. – Killer On The Road, CD

Former Boy’s Life singer/songwriter returns to his roots with this quirky alt-country solo effort. While influenced by the likes of Tom Waits, Neil Young and Steve Earle, Butler’s creation is entirely his own, which comes through loud and clear on the standout tracks “Killer On The Road” and “True Believer.” (BN)

Gern Blandsten Records, PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661, www.gernblandsten.com

Caligula – We Burn Bridges, CDEP

How many more bands that sound like this do we need? This singer sounds like he’s puking. At times the drums are so all over the place that it sounds like he’s just playing random stuff. I’m sure its incredibly technical, but it’s also incredibly boring to me. (DA)

United Edge Records, PO Box 342, Dalmeny, SK 50K 1E0, UK, www.unitededge.com

Call Me Lightning – The Trouble We’re In

Call Me Lightning are a Minutemen/Magazine-influenced three-piece who bring the urgency of Drive Like Jehu. Present are the idiosyncratic lead bass, off-time rhythm section and angular guitar. All in all a solid effort, if somewhat lacking in variety. (RL)

Revelation, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA, 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

Campground Effect – The Tight Seat, CDEP

The Campground Effect’s liner notes say “rock music is not art” and maybe they’re right. It’s about the guttural drive of the guitars and the pop and hammer of tight drums. It’s about making you tap your foot and bob your head. No art here, just straight-up rock. (CC)

The Local Cannery Recording Co., www.thelocalcannery.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Slant 6, Soda Pop Rip Off. Christina Billotte has one of the most distinctive voices in underground music; the husky roll in her voice is immediately recognizable. And you have to love a girl (or any person for that matter) who never fails to do her own thing. Billotte’s vocals and crooked, rock ‘n’ roll-inspired guitar served as the backbone of Slant 6’s skeletal, midtempo punk, and they distinguished the band from being just an average, ho-hum post-punk band. There’s a lot of life in her guitar playing, making the songs on *Soda Pop Rip Off* noisily danceable, most notably the title track, the snotty “Poison Arrows Shot At Heroes” and “Don’t You Ever?” I could go on naming, but I won’t. The primitive song structures work to their advantage; sometimes it’s better when everyone in the band isn’t a musical virtuoso. From start to finish, even the slower tracks (“Love Shock,” “Become Your Ghost”), the songs on this album are both moody and fun. Their noisy melodies and noise segments are also worth mentioning, such as the drunkenly disorganized trumpet playing on “March 6.” Subduing the madness of Bikini Kill and simplifying the melodies of Sleater-Kinney, this album is completely fun, but with a straight face.

Say What? Elliott Smith, *Either/Or*; The Best of Big Star, *Big Beat*; Smoosh, *She Like Electric*; Neko Case, *Blacklisted*; Quasi, *Hot Shit*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Bill Angelbeck (BA)

Phantom Tollbooth, Power Toy. This band took their name from a fine children’s book by Norton Juster of the same name, a surreal story about the kingdom of letters fighting with the kingdom of numbers. Maybe some elements provide some links to the sound of this band. Released in 1988, *Power Toy* was their second full-length, and it became their finest piece. Phantom Tollbooth were a versatile and variable three-piece that were extremely tight through some very transformative and heavy songs. Change-ups, tangents and break-aways are a regular feature of their style, making it in hindsight some early math-rock, like an indie-rock Rush. Sometimes they did use glimpses of ‘70s hard-rock, as epitomized in their full-bore cover of Heart’s “Barracuda” with harsh edges in garage production. On “Circus Of Wolves,” they sing a simple and beautiful country ditty over subtle ambient noise, but as the song progresses, the noise and chaotic drumming grow louder and drown the vocals and acoustic guitar in their din. Robert Pollard once said that if he had sung for Phantom Tollbooth, they would have ruled the world. The band sent him the original tracks, minus the vocals, and he created his own version of the album with new vocals; it’s called *Beard Of Lightning*. It makes for an interesting companion to the original.

In the glove box: The Magnetic Fields, *i*; Electrelane, *The Power Out*; Steve Earle, *The Revolution Starts Now*; Dosh, *Pure Trash* (reviewed this issue); Juana Molina, *Tres Cosas*.

**Car Bomb Driver – Official Bootleg, CDEP**

Here's what happens when the Ramones influence is used for evil instead of good. Über-juvenile lyrics about chicks ("They're all a bunch of sluts"), shitty jobs and suburbia, with one song boasting that they're "The Shit." Lose the "the," and you're right on target. (JC)
Self-released, 3600 38th Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33713, www.carbombdriver.com

Carpenter Ant – I Still Have The Drive, CD

Not the usual hyper thrash of modern "skate rock" bands, Carpenter Ant seem to focus on power more than speed. Their songs feature some nice, galloping guitar parts and tough Swiz or Bl'ast-type moments. A lot of midpaced rippers full of rage and swellbows. They also do an I Hate You cover. (NS)

Doppelganger, 803 Saint John St., Allentown, PA 18103, www.doppelgangerrecords.com

Carrie Nations – Be Still, 12"

Straight-forward punk in the vein of early Fifteen and Crimpshrine, albeit with very silly lyrics. Nothing overly complicated—just good, catchy melodies, sing-along choruses and ardent vocals delivered with an edgy confidence and attitude. This is punk rock done right, done well. (BN)

Better Like The Bean, PO Box 34675, Philadelphia, PA 19101

Carrier – Heart & Arms, CDEP

Having a song entitled "Andre The Giant And Cool 'Disco' Dan Take On The Slave Trade" is a feat of creativity, but when every song mines similar territory, the praise is withheld. An identically bumpy and jangly guitar riff, complemented by homogenous a bass line make for interesting ideas left out to dry. (SM)

The Electric Human Project, 500 South Union Street, Wilmington, DE 19805, www.electrichumanproject.com

Casal, Neal – Leaving Traces: Songs 1994-2004, CD

County folk-rock artist Neal Casal's 11th release is an 18-track retrospective of the prolific songsmith's past 10 years. His effortless acoustic stylings and heart-wrenchingly honest lyrics place him in the same emotional alt-country category as Ryan Adams. This would make an excellent introductory disc for anyone interested in Casal's work. (LW)

Fargo, 9, Passage de la Boule Blanche, 75012 Paris, France, www.fargorecords.com

Case, Neko – The Tigers Have Spoken, CD

This live album is a snack to stave off the hunger for Case's new studio record next spring. But it's not typical; only two songs on it are previously released. There are two new songs as well in addition to covers of Buffy Saint Marie, Loretta Lynn and more. (KR)

Anti-, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026

Cast Aside – The Struggle, CD

Reviewer Tim Kuehl gave me the first Cast Aside album awhile back, and I

didn't dig it. This did little to change that. It reminds me of a cross between Holding On and A18, two bands I like, but it just doesn't do it for me. (DA)
Deathwish Inc., 35 Congress St., Ste. 336, Salem, MA 01970-5567, www.deathwishinc.com

Champion – Promises Kept, CD

I wanted to hear this, so it was great to see it in my box. The first comparison that came to mind was Insted. I think I'd even say that is sounds like a less melodic Fields Of Fire. Coming from me, those are high accolades. The vocals are yelled, but melodic, and the music is really catchy. Even the lyrics rule. It's refreshing to see hardcore bands talking about positive things without getting preachy. I seriously encourage anyone who's into straightedge hardcore, or melodic hardcore in general, to get this album. This is the best straightedge hardcore in recent memory besides the Our Turn 7". (DA)

Bridge 9 Records, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

Charmparticles – Sit Down For Staying, CDEP

Oh dear, has this record been a gem in my review pile, or what? Fabulously crafted shoegazer rock reminiscent of the greats (MBV, Slowdive)—but not rehashed—and with a bit of a more feminine, poppy touch. Great! (MG)
Childstar Records, 411 E. Loretta Pl., Seattle, WA 98102, www.child-star.com

Cinema, The – S/T, CD

Upbeat poppy indie rock that sounds like it should be on a bigger label, but it's not as sappy and generic. They're pretty dynamic and feature some soaring vocals. This reminds me of the first Mock Orange album: rockin' dual guitars with nice riffs and softer parts that become mellow and dreamy. (NS)

Self-released, 487 Susan Circle, Marion, OH 43302, www.thecinemasounds.com

Coastal – Halfway To You, CD

With female vocalist Luisa Gough performing on almost every song, Coastal improve on their already lovely sadcore styling (think Ida or Low). This second LP finds greater instrumental variation, bells, cello and viola, adding a rich texture to the songs. Delicate and beautiful, Coastal have found their true sound. (MP)

Words On Music, 715 University Ave. SE #201, Minneapolis, MN 55414, www.words-on-music.com

Complete Control – Reaction, CD

TKO, generally known for picking up already well-known bands, here puts out an impressive debut album from a unique band from Austin. Their songs are uniformly fast, but they have a older, almost new wave feel to them. The lead guitar lines and punchy drumming add to the bounciness. Killer! (AE)

TKO Records, 8941 Atlanta Ave #505, Huntington Beach, CA 92646, www.tkorecords.com

Converge – You Fail Me, CD

After the beyond-frantic sound of 2001's *Jane Doe* left me exhausted, the relatively mellow (for Converge) opening tracks of *You Fail Me* are disori-

enting. You can actually understand singer Jake Bannon in "Last Light"; he usually sounds like his skin is being stripped off. Things get familiar with track three, though, revealing the Converge whose sound is hard to describe. It's a technically daunting ("Hope Street") mix of metal, noise and punk. Bannon's lyrics have reached a new level of bleakness, which is really saying something, as he's never been terribly sunny. The anger in the title track and elsewhere is enough to melt your Taking Back Sunday CDs: "you fail me with every fatal crush / you fail me with your inferno fuck me eyes / that burn as fuel for my city and its neon lights." After the unbearable doom of the title track comes "In Her Shadow," a mellow song that incorporates, of all things, an acoustic guitar. Of course, right after it is the manic hardcore of "Eagles Become Vultures." Converge doesn't seem content to make a 2004 version of *Jane Doe*, and the nuances of *You Fail Me* help distinguish this as perhaps their boldest record to date. Get it and be destroyed. (KR)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Countless Shadows / Until The Fall – split, CD

Countless Shadows delivers some thrashy, screamy hardcore with some sweet circle-pit parts and lots of screaming. Until The Fall starts off with some total Slayer worship riffing and segues into some nice metal-tinged hardcore with a slight youth-crew feel. Both bands here show lots of potential, for sure. (DH)

High Fidelity Records, PO Box 1071, Grover Beach, CA 93483, www.highfidelityrecords.com

Craig's Brother – Epidemic, CDEP

This Santa Cruz band with a singer that sounds like Michael Stipe has been around for almost ten years. They've been playing California pop-punk for all that time, and they've stuck to their bare-bones version of that sound. Kudos to them for knowing their place and doing it well. (AE)
Takeover Records, 2069 N. Argyle, #305, Hollywood, CA 90068, www.takeoverrock.com

Cramps, The – How To Make A Monster, 2xCD

This collection has both positives and negatives. The early practice sessions are for die-hard fans only, but the second disc with two early shows has more to offer. Everything here is previously unreleased, and the *Live At CBGB In '78* completely rocks it out. Check out their roots. (DM)
Vengeance Records, www.vengeancerecords.com

Croup, The – S/T, CD

The result of a collaboration between established artists Jason Gambrell and Casey Brandt, The Croup's self-titled debut is a mix of fuzzed up acoustic rock and bluegrass. It's decent enough, but it sounds like a lesser version of Ugly Casanova's debut. (MP)

Mungler Winslowe Records, PO Box 150671, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.munglerwinslowe.com

Das Oath – S/T, CD

Hells yeah! Here we have some 1990s hardcore all-stars taken" it up a notch. This record is what the *bo-o-o-oring* punk/hardcore scene of

Reviewer Spotlight – Jay Castaldi (JC)

Ramones, S/T LP. Plenty has been said about this album in the 29 years since it was released, but with the recent passing of Johnny Ramone, I'm compelled to add my two cents. It's hard to imagine a time when rock guitarists didn't play like Johnny Ramone, so it's easy to forget how crazy and groundbreaking this record sounded in 1976. The songs are all simple, fast and short, and there are no guitar solos (which was almost criminal in the mid-'70s, the golden age of capital-G, capital-S Guitar Solos). *Ramones* clearly makes a statement that would eventually become one of the cornerstones of punk rock: *Anyone can do this! You don't have to be a virtuoso! You don't even have to be good! Just do it!* This record practically doubles as an instructional album for the aspiring punk rock guitarist: Emulating the Beatles' early stereo-mixing techniques, *Ramones* is mixed with the guitar panned all the way over into the right speaker and the bass panned all the way into the left speaker. Just turn the balance control all the way to the right, and the guitar parts are right there for you to figure out and play along with. Once you've got those down, you can switch the balance over to the left to take the guitar out of the mix, and now you're Johnny Ramone.

Five best Ramones songs with "Wanna" in the title: "I Don't Wanna Walk Around With You," "I Wanna Be Sedated," "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue," "I Don't Wanna Go Down To The Basement," "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend."

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

Rocket From The Crypt, All Systems Go. Vol. 2. Everyone says they like the older stuff better, as if to presume the new stuff has no caliber whatsoever. Sure, it's bigger, dumber and rocks more swagger, but those who deny such qualities in their life are also afraid of the outdoors and get prudish about boners. Say what you will, but to overlook this collection of RFTC b-sides, compilation tracks and miscellanea would be like crucifying The Big J, but forgetting the nails. It's that essential. Why? Because you would be missing out on RFTC's sessions with Holly Golightly. One song, "Lipstick" made it on the overly produced RFTC album, but songs like "Cheetah," "Turkish Revenge," "U.S.Aim," "Crack Party" and "Raped by Ape" are, in my opinion, some of the finest RFTC songs ever put to tape. Golightly's vocals provide a perfect foil to John Reis' guttural bellow, and the two manipulate the melodies/harmonies to an effective bliss. I would be happy if this second compilation were five songs long. Luckily, there are more, covering RFTC's noisy terrain to their ultimate pop moments, ending with a slew of cover tunes that vary from brilliant homage to regretful butcheries.

I peed on Jesse Helm's future gravesite once: Kim Ki-Duk movies; Self Defense, *Megatonpunkdisruptor 7"*; Paintbox, *Earthball Sports Tournament*; Ghostface Killah, *The Pretty Toney Album*; Pedestrians demo.

the present needs: crazy, loud and fast, yet heartwarmingly reminiscent of the "good ol' days." If you once loved (or still love) bands like Los Crudos, Charles Bronson, MK Ultra, etc., then you must check this out immediately. And don't forget to keep it playing for an eerily noisy surprise track. (MG)

Dim Mak, PO Box 348, Hollywood, CA 90078, www.dimmak.com

David Thomas & Two Pale Boys - 18 Monkeys On A Dead Man's Chest, CD

A project from Pere Ubu's David Thomas, this charts improvisatory courses through strange terrain and takes influences from Zappa and Waits. Thomas plays the meledone (an accordion precursor) and waxes poetic amidst Moline's guitars and violin and Diagram's trumpet bursts. Ubu fanatics: Mark yet another one to pick up. (BA)

Smog Veil, 550 W. Plumb Ln., #8501, Reno, NV, 89509, www.smogveil.com

Dawson, Kimya - Hidden Vagenda, CD

Kimya Dawson is a child, and I mean that in a good way. There's something in her voice that suggests innocence, wonderment and curiosity. It's because of this unaffected voice that her new studio album, *Hidden Vagenda*, is a success. Dawson covers all bases here, singing songs about death, consumerism, domestic abuse and choosing Isaac Hanson over a member of The Strokes. Someone else doing this might sound pretentious, but Dawson pulls it off. Although she covers some serious subjects, she sticks to the same folksy, clumsy strumming that has worked so well in her previous solo recordings. On a few songs she brings in additional instruments and vocalists to fill out her sound, working best on album opener "It's Been Raining," but dragging Sept. 11th ode "Anthrax" down. Overall, Dawson uses her voice to ponder and debate all of her uncomplicated, but relevant, thoughts, making the listener stop and want to answer all of her questions. (MP)

K Records, Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecs.com

A Day In Black And White - My Heroes Have Always Killed Cowboys, CDEP

Given the band name, mediocrity seems inevitable. These DC'ers take their cues from the area's obvious ground-breakers and replicate them blatantly, without tact or style. I'm running out of adjectives to describe the ongoing insurgency of boring post-whatever, coated with suspicious attempts of artistic dissonance and melody-less vocal rants. (BM)

Level Plane, PO Box 7926 Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Dead Combo - S/T, CD

These Finnish guys based in New York mix up several styles here via Moog synth beams, danceable drumbeats, and heavy psych-rock guitars. The vocals are a weak aspect, but it's a fine specimen of space-rock party material. They offer a heavy, distorted version of Bowie's "Let's Dance." (BA)

Output Recordings Limited, PO Box 16628, London N1 7WE, www.outputrecordings.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Carla Costa (CC)

The Make-Up, Destination Love: Live At Cold Rice. An old friend once told me that one of his Top Five All-Time Rock Show Experiences was seeing The Make-Up live in New York City. He was about 17 and, as awkward young guys do, he usually hung to the back of the crowd at shows. This time he took a chance and made his way to the front of the stage. Lucky for him, lead singer Ian Svenonious decided to use his shoulder as a platform to lunge out at the crowd. Besides the music, that was the highlight of the night for him. Maybe that friend was a chump, but more likely he was taken in by the frenzied atmosphere of The Make-Up's live show. This document, recorded by Guy Picciotto during the band's best years, captures the essence of The Gospel Yeh Yeh sound, that "bind in which boy and girl find the notion of their mission of affection and their destination of love." *Are you a believer? Do you believe?* I believed in Michelle Mae's stellar bass and her bouffant, Steve Gamboa's danceable drumbeats, James Canty's jagged/jangly guitar lines and the smutty, peacock strut of Mr. Svenonious. With their matching gear, elaborate mantras and synchronized snarls, The Make-Up turned mod style and sound into a post-post-modern take on angst, love and lust. It was definitely worth taking a footprint on the shoulder just to be near something that white hot.

Extrasensory overload: Arcade Fire, *Funeral*; The Trouble With Sweeney, *Fishtown Briefcase*; Get Your War On by David Rees; *Dang!* #3 by Martin Cendreda, *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

Ramones, It's Alive. One of the first times I felt old in punk was when Joey Ramone died in 2001, and I was talking to a younger friend about Ramones shows. He blurted out with amazement, "You saw The Ramones?" Today, of course, there are still four living Ramones (Tommy, Marky, Richie and C Jay). But the three most recognizable founding members all met untimely deaths, so to younger punks the thought of seeing The Ramones is dreamlike. As with many people in my generation, my first punk show was a Ramones concert (7/13/90), and I saw them several times after that. As great as the lineup I saw was, I always wished I'd seen them as featured on my favorite live album, *It's Alive*. This double LP is a must, and yes, you do need the vinyl, as the CD doesn't sound right. Recorded in London on New Year's Eve of 1977, it's a 28-song time capsule of the band at their peak. Until 1995, *It's Alive* wasn't available domestically, so it also holds a special place in my heart as being the first "rare" record I owned. Play it now to revisit a kick-ass live album and in memory of the dead.

The kids are onto these, and the kids know their shit: Leftover Crack, *Fuck World Trade*; The Jabbers, *American Standard*; Ramones, *Raw DVD*; The Spits, *19 Million A.C.*; Green Day, *American Idiot*.

Dead To Fall - Villainy & Virtue, CD

Pretty much exactly what I'd expect from a Victory hardcore band: dark metal riffs, growling vocals, massive chug breakdowns with pumping double bass, and a melodic touch. Very well done, but ain't nothin' new. (MG)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Ste 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Decontrol - The Final War, CD

The spirit and influence of Discharge live on in Decontrol, from the bass-heavy pulverizing hardcore with throat-ripping vocals right down to the band members' spiky hair and studded leather jackets. Oil! (JC)

Hardcore Holocaust, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

DEK - Boner, CD

Not since Old Skull has the world seen a bunch of youngsters with a punk pedigree like DEK. But unlike Old Skull, DEK is actually good. They play youthful punk thrash bordering on pop punk, but never getting quite as bland or juvenile as you might expect. You'd never guess that these kids are preteens by their musicianship. Some of the bass parts are played with a humbling amount of speed (like on "Back From The Dead") and catchiness (like on "Sip And Move On"). The guitarists are no slouches, either, with lots of cool hardcore parts, solos and nonpunk influences. The lyrics are goofy at times ("Captain Pickle") and serious at others, but there's always something likable about their energetic vocals. There are also some songs dealing with monsters and zombies, which makes it fitting that the singer and guitarist of splattercore pioneers The Accused make cameos on a couple tracks. A great CD, and I'm curious to see where DEK go from here with this much talent. (NS)

Finger Records, 18092 Sky Park Circle, #51A, Irvine, CA 92614, www.fingerrecords.com

Delgados, The - Universal Audio, CD

Indie rock with a lot a variety, *Universal Audio* is strong showing. Hints of the pop elements from Breeders' Last Splash, Wire's angular guitar work and deep, heavy bass can all be found on this platter. Recommended for fans of dream pop. (RL)

Transdreamer Records, PO Box 1955, New York, NY 10113, www.megaforcerecords.com/transdreamer

Denim And Diamonds - Street Medics Unite, CDEP

Denim and Diamonds' techno beats serve as the background for, mostly, the vocalists plaintive delivery, and despite their penchant for robotic tweets/twitters and some streaming guitar riffs, it still sounds trite. (CC)

Bloodlink, 4434 Ludlow St, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.bloodlink.com

Derek Lyn Plastic - Invisible Skin, 7"

From Atlanta, Derek Lyn Plastic put out this red vinyl six-song EP of some tinny, retro punk with added synth bits. The straight-ahead surface simplicity of the songs just makes it catchy. (BA)

Self-released, 691 John Wesley Dobbs Ave., Unit M, Atlanta, GA 30312

Désinvoltura - Psycho-Path, CD

Here are a dozen indistinguishable songs presented in a generic hard-rock formula. The lead singer, Melée, tries to sound like she's not trying too hard, while pulling all the tricks, including whispering to sound sexy and swearing randomly and loudly to sound edgy. Boring and tiresome. (MP)

Exile on Mainstream Records, Schlesische Straße 28, 1. Hof 10997, Berlin, Germany, www.mainstreamrecords.de

Detachment Kit, The - Of This Blood, CD

If rock 'n' roll were a state, this record would be firmly planted in Indiana. A lot of dream-style guitar work (the kind where the lead guitarist has to bend down to reach the high parts on his/her Les Paul) and Sunny Day vocals. A bit predictable, but better than most of the genre. (RL)

French Kiss Records, www.frenchkissrecords.com

Devilinside - Volume One, CD

I was into this band's EP, liking them to Turmoil, and this full-length is a logical follow-up with heavier riffing and more screaming. Interludes aside, those seeking a consistently moshable hardcore record with no stupid singing, look no further. (DH)

Abacus Recordings, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250, www.abacusrecordings.com

Die Monir Batss / A.S.T. - split, CDEP

The droning, dissonant no-wave chug of Die Monir Batss gets tedious quickly. Luckily it's a quick shift into A.S.T., whose sound is similar but incorporates the subtle melodies needed to, not only, hold together cacophonous composition but to maintain the listener's attention. (CC)

Dim Mak, PO Box 348, Hollywood, CA 90078, www.dimmak.com

Disconnect - S/T, 12"

Up-tempo punk fucking rock that would fit in nicely over at Dischord. Vocals remind me of Strike Anywhere a tad, but not enough to be a total rip off. Comes with a cool lyric booklet with neat cartoons. Solid. (DH)

Spacemint Records, 5120 Idlebury Way, Reno, NV 89523, www.spacemintreno.com

Disrespect - S/T, 7"

Disrespect play raging, '80s style hardcore punk with dual guy (and occasional girl) vocals. I don't typically care for this style, but I can tell these guys are good at what they do. The insert folds out to become a big poster with Reagan's head on it. (KM)

Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profaneexistence.com

Doers, The - Ready, Set...Do, CD

This CD a real testament to Mike Watt's bass influence. He plays bass on the tracks taken from a Doers EP included on *Ready, Set...Do*. The music has boy/girl vocals and travels a vast musical landscape. It's actually the non-Watt session tracks that have even more Watt-esque sounds to them. (DI)

Red Cat Records, 4307 Man St, Vancouver, B.C., V5V 3R1, Canada, www.redcat.ca



Dog Soldier – Barking Of The Dogs Of War, CD

From the punx mecca of PDX, ex-members of Blood Spit Nights and a Defiance guitarist play blistering midtempo punk. The songs start out in a sonic frenzy (think divebombs galore), but quickly degrade into an unmemorable charging. Solidly played, but can't seem to hold my attention longer than ten seconds. (VC)

Hardcore Holocaust, 3509 IH 35, Austin, TX 78722-1801, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Doiron, Julie – Goodnight Nobody, CD

Julie Doiron's well-written, introspective yarns have a scarcity about them that shows off her distinctive, hushed vocals. Guitar-driven, but bringing in drums, banjo, piano and a ukulele ("Some Blues"), her songs are engaging throughout. She starts and finishes strong. Also, great artwork. (AJA)

Jagjaguwar, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.jagjaguwar.com

Dollyrots, The – Eat My Heart Out, CD

Channeling '60s girl groups and drawing from the girl-punk tradition (The Muffs, The Donnas, and Manda And The Marbles), The Dollyrots come out with bouncy hooks, rapid drumbeats and handclaps that draw you in from the beginning with the killer leadoff "Kick Me To The Curb." Tracks like "New College," "Love You Most" and "Nobody Else" are sheer pop perfection. Lead singer Kelly Ogden's saccharine-sweet vocals cheer, chant and harmonize over the bubblegum power pop of this debut album that is solid from start to finish. *Eat My Heart Out* is infectious, incredibly fun and begs to be played repeatedly. One listen and I guarantee that you will be hooked. (MP)

Self-released, www.dollyrots.com

Dolorean – Violence In The Snowy Fields, CD

Dolorean's sophomore release is a morose collection of folk songs given the alt-country treatment that's so popular these days. A nice record to wind down to after an especially hectic week, when introspection comes easiest. (BN)

Yep Roc, www.yeproc.com

Dosh – Naoise, CDEP

Naoise is EP by Martin Dosh that features plaintive melodies from a Rhodes piano in the midst of breakaway beats and other percussions. These are wonderfully loose and playful compositions, making it a fine companion to the full-length album, described below. (BA)

Anticon Records, www.anticon.com

Dosh – Pure Trash, CD

Dosh delivers some heavily textured instrumentals that are soaked in drumbeats, electronics, noises and a plethora of percussion: rattles, bells, spoons and who knows. Sometimes the keys of a piano wander throughout. The pieces evolve through elaborate incarnations, retaining an airy feel that keeps the music crisp. Although mostly lyricless, *Pure Trash* has some vocal recordings throughout that add thoughtful contributions to these pieces, and these point toward a theme. The main piece, "Naoise," is named after his new baby boy, and these songs are infused with the bliss of welcoming a new life. These mixes

can force a smile, even on the most jaded among us. In the process, Dosh also gives birth to an excellent album. (BA)

Anticon Records, www.anticon.com

Drinkers Themselves, The – The Drinking Album, CD

As the title would suggest, every song on *The Drinking Album* is somehow inspired by booze. The joke wears a little thin throughout the course of the record, but there's enough ramshackle acoustics to make *The Drinkers Themselves* sound like a low-rent Libertines. (TM)

Self-released, www.drinkersthemselfs.com

Dukes Of Hillsborough, The / Altaira – Sometimes You Eat The Bar Sometimes The Bar Eats You, split CD

Both groups play fairly straight-forward, energetic, bar-room punk with few surprises. But it's entertaining enough for what it is. Not bad. (AJ)

A.D.D., PO Box 8240 Tampa, FL 33674, www.addwreckedkids.com

Dwarves – The Dwarves Must Die, CD

The Dwarves may have finally found their *Pet Sounds*—not to say this is a collection of transcendent pop, unless you've got brain damage and think pavement saws sound like string sections. Instead, this is where Blag Dahlia's warped genius for catchy punk rock has successfully impregnated electronica and hip-hop to produce non-retarded offspring (a near impossibility—see rap-metal), with the help of 14 individual Dwarves credited as band members. The pure surfy pop of "Bleed On" starts the disc, only to collapse into the industro-pummel punk of "FEFU." "Salt Lake City" is the best poppy punk song that's not pop-punk this year, and "Runaway #2" is an acoustic take on Lou Reed's gutter-kid stories via "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover." "Massacre" has Blag calling out "fake punkers with the pussy ass managers," "Bad Charlotte" and "Queens Of The Trust Fund" over a credible hip-hop musical track. Yes, *The Dwarves Must Die* is that schizophrenic. Even more surprising, it works. The Dwarves have been stretching in this ultra-produced, punk-tronica direction at least since 2000's *The Dwarves Come Clean*, but the results were decidedly mixed, especially to an audience as cretinous as the one the Dwarves have cultivated for over 15 years. Given the chance, at least one song here should be able to find a commercial audience on one of several radio formats. While it seems unlikely to make them huge, *The Dwarves Must Die* might finally get the Dwarves out of the shock-punk ghetto. (RR)

Sympathy for the Record Industry, www.sympathyrecords.com

Dynasty Electric Duo – Hypnotized / Supersonic, 7"

Guitar and synth electric pop with rock edge that has a whimsical, hypnotic trance to it. Add in the sexy girl vocals and great arrangements, and you have a fun and fresh record. (EH)

Dollar Record Records, 332 Fell St., #2, San Francisco, CA 94102, www.dollarrecord.com

Eames Era, The – The Second EP, CDEP

Choppy, Strokes-like guitar lines, charming female vocals, flawless harmonies and hand claps a-plenty make this EP irresistible. It's hard to believe this album is self-produced and released, judging by the slick recording quality. Each of these four songs is perfectly poppy and radio-ready. (LW)

No contact information provided

Eddie Haskell, The – Dumpster Divin', CD

With a name like The Eddie Haskell, I'm thinking pop-punk. Maybe they were pop-punkers at one time, a few years ago, but pop-punk is out and snotty '77 punk with fakey British accents is in, so here we are. Cookie-cutter stuff with dumb lyrics and choruses that go on too long. (JC)

Super Speedway Music, 108 Paseo De San Antonio, San Jose, CA 95113, www.supersm.com

E3 – Primary, CD

A hardcore band from back when hardcore was associated with punk. In touch with their emotions and recording on a budget, this might appeal to fans of the previously mentioned genres. (RL)

Linden Records, PO Box 230764, Las Vegas, NV 89123, www.lindenrecords.com

800 Octane – Rise Again, CD & DVD

I'm not crazy about this style of music. It reminds me too much of commercially popular punk bands: overdone singing that borders on anthemic and mechanical-sounding guitar. It wasn't that bad, but I'm not a fan. (JIG)

New School Records! PO Box 2094 Oregon City, OR 97045, www.newschoorecords.com

El Buzzard – Tranquilizanté Del Elefanté, CDEP

If you're gonna do the punk/metal/sludge thing, bring something new to it—like these guys did. This alternates among heavy, artsy and fast, and every variation is engaging and raw. (RR)

The Electric Human Project, 500 S. Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805, www.electrichumanproject.com

Elevator Division – Years, CD

No matter what stage of life we are in, everybody seems to be trying to exude a sense of maturity that invariably lies just outside their grasp. This lazy kind of pretension can sometimes work to people's advantage (i.e., why everyone will graduate college with a job besides me), but musically it can often lead to an even more boring result than that sweet six-figure accounting job. In *Elevator Division's* effort to sound as professional as possible, *Years* winds up sounding like a mindless, second-rate Coldplay or, even worse, a peer of The Juliana Theory. Stockpiled with high-quality, lush arrangements and sweeping choruses, *Elevator Division* sound just as bored playing such middle-of-the-road material as I am listening to it. Remember for next time, kids: Modern rock dates itself quite quickly. (MS)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084 Kansas City, MO 64141-3084, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Engine Down – S/T, CD

After playing second banana to Denali, the decidedly *not* rockin' former project of two of its members, Engine Down have returned to prominence with guns blazing. The overall sound is big, highly melodic, intense post-punk/emo with huge guitars—a slick record that blows away just about every other emo/screamo band out there today. (KR)

Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Ergs!, The – Dork Rock Cork Rod, CD

When I started listening in and looking at the CD, I actually thought these guys love the Descendents and Doc Hopper. Then I see a member wearing a Descendents T-shirt, and the producer is an old acquaintance, Chris "Gobo" Pierce from Doc Hopper. Doc Hopper was a punk band with so

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

Weirdos, *Weird World 1*. This is classic punk rock: the Weirdos' prime years (1977-1981) captured on this fabulous compilation of single and demo tracks. Like many of the great early LA and SoCal punk bands, the Weirdos never released a proper full-length and, sadly, never reached the revered status of so many of their East Coast contemporaries. But they have left their mark with this collection (as well as the *Weird World 2* comp), full of their hilariously humorous, strange punk tunes. Most notably, the stand-out tracks "Helium Bar" and "We Got The Neutron Bomb." This should be a staple in any punk-lovers collection.

Damn good records: Bloc Party, EP; Screem Club, *Don't Bite Your Sister*; Year Future, *The Hidden Hand* EP; Ultramagnetic MC's, *Critical Beatdown* reissue; all things Fad Gadget.

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

Mary Lou Lord, *S/T*. To most, Mary Lou Lord is most famous for being stalked and hunted by resident crazy bitch Courtney Love. Seems Mary Lou had a little fling with Kurt Cobain before Love was on the scene, and that didn't please Miss Love too much. It's a shame, too, that she's not better known for her striking, childlike vocals, her stunning original songs and her beautiful remakes of songs by Daniel Johnston, The Bevis Frond, Matt Keating and others. Her 1995 self-titled Kill Rock Stars release is eight blissful tracks of simple vocals/guitar sweetness, the highlight of which might just be her self-penned ode to the Nirvana-ed One, "The Bridge," where Lord plaintively urges Cobain to "block up your ears if she starts to bitch / but whatever you do babe, don't burn down the bridge." Although she later got lost in the major-label shuffle, Lord's stint with Kill Rock Stars remains her best and brightest.

much pop sensibility it creeped me out that a band could be so aggro and catchy at the same time. Well, The Ergs! took notes from one of the best in the biz and came up with 16 tracks of an instant classic, which quickly found a home in my collection. Hot licks, incredible drumming (while singing!) and awesome bass lines. It doesn't break new ground, but it's hard to find good pop that isn't an old Weasel or Queens record. Also, *All/Descendents* can't make good records anymore, so these kids should definitely step in and take a swing. Those are big, harsh words for my favorites, but this rocks out so hard, it's practically making me hard. Songs with a sense of humor and all about girls, 'nuff said. Buy it already! (DM)

Whoa Oh Records, 21-36 43rd St., Third Floor, Astoria, NY 11005, www.whoaohrecords.com

🔪 Escape Grace - S/T, CDEP

I was ready to write this off as soon as I heard a part that sounded like there was going to be singing after a verse of screaming, but it never happened. What the fuck?! It's sad that I've come to associate melody in crunchier bands with horrible, off-key crooning, but that's the formula these days, I guess. Escape Grace is where melodic hardcore should be going, but unfortunately isn't. Melody is mixed in with the distortion, but Escape Grace spares us the bullshit singing that has 14-year-old Warped Tour girls trying to fuck the guys in Atreyu like they were Zeppelin or something. There's also a fairly obvious Coalesce influence here ("Good-bye, Hy Vanessa"), which is cool, but the band doesn't show the page they tore out of their book up on the overhead projector or anything. You have to take notes before it's erased off of the chalkboard. These five songs are good and all, but as the King of Metal I demand a longer, better produced release immediately. Easily the sleeper hit of the issue, and you should seek this out if you're tired of melodic hardcore automatically resulting in singing. More! (DH)

City of Hell, PO Box 2412, Providence, RI 02906, www.city666.com

🔪 Even In Blackouts - Zeitgeist's Echo, CD

Chicago's acoustic punkers (featuring Jughead from Screaming Weasel) return with a sprawling 17-track CD—"sprawling" being the pejorative term for "ambitious." While a hook-laden song like "Dear Resonance" shines with catchy guitars and well-done vocals, there are also brief filler tracks that add nothing but time to the record (two, seven, among others). Then Zeitgeist's takes a bizarre turn at track 15, the second of a three-part song called "Curtain." It's completely out of place not just because of its electrified noise (this is an acoustic CD), but also due to its spoken-word short-story vocals. It almost seems like the CD is following some kind of linear storyline, which would help its case, but I don't think it is. Zeitgeist's Echo is ambitious, but it lacks a cohesiveness to pull off everything it's trying to accomplish. It's as if the band decided to put everything they wanted on the CD, but never thought about editing. In the end, it just sounds long, uneven and forgettable. (KR)

Knock Knock Records, 394 Hewlett Ave., Patchogue, NY 11772, www.knockknockrecords.com

Evergreen Terrace - At Our Worst, CD

A collection of early demo and live tracks from these well-known emo/tech-metal maniacs, complete with a cover of the Smashing Pumpkins "Zero." The liner notes indicate this is only to hold you over until their next release. Still, fans won't be disappointed. (TK)

Hand of Hope, PO Box 24913, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.handofohope.com

Evil Robot Us - In Song And In Dance, 7"

Cramming these five songs into a tiny space of vinyl is like squeezing a sumo wrestler into a pair of jeans with a 30-inch waist. They do a grassy screamo thing that prays for an undying ease of life. They'd be better served praying for a lesson in pacing. (SM)

Fistolo Records, PO Box 2836, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.fistolo.com

🔪 Ex, The - Turn, 2xCD

The anarchist veterans from Amsterdam release yet another excellent piece of work in an already industrious discography. Formed in 1979, they have grown well beyond their post-punk roots into avant-rock, noise, improvisation and indigenous styles. Two recent releases were the *In The Fishtank* collaborations with Tortoise, Sonic Youth and ICP. Turn finds them again bursting out brutal rhythms, political chants and discordant, jagged guitars. With their intricate harshness, The Ex are a band that really are showcased well through the recording of Steve Albini, who gives each musician their distinct clarity amidst the dissonance. He also recorded previous albums like *Starters and Alternators* and *Dizzy Spells*. On "The Pie," Sok recites the recipe and instructions for pieing the powerful. On the first track, "Listen To The Painters," they exhort the need for poetry and paintings—a call for art as a weapon against ignorance and narrow-mindedness. With Turn's boundary-crushing fervor and politics, The Ex provide a model case of such an effort. (BA)

Touch and Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, www.touchandgo.com

Extinction Of Mankind - The Nightmare Seconds..., 12"

Midtempo crusty punk rock that you'd expect from Profane Existence. I can just picture the leather and ass-flaps as I type. Some nice metal guitar overtones, but the tight pants and ass-flap culture just isn't my thing. Definitely excellent for what it is, though. (DH)

Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profaneeexistence.com

Fabulous Disaster - I'm A Mess, CD

Bratty female pop-punk that strains for catchy melodies, but fall just short of their potential. I can't tell if they're just starting out or hitting their denouement, but it lacks the fire that makes a band stellar. Get it now before Fat Wreck eats it up and chomies their sound. (VC)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Fair To Midland - Inter.Funda.Stifle, CD

This album seems to be some epic prog-rock statement that fails miserably. The band tries too hard, with overindulgent guitar solos and unbearable musical interludes. The singer comes off like Yes' Jon Anderson

performing at a Renaissance fair. Like a Renaissance fair, this should be avoided. (MP)

www.ftmband.com

Fairley, Jake - Touch Not The Cat, CD

"Casio trance" is what I like to call this record. It's glummy techno electronica that anyone could probably come up with if he/she got a key-board for Christmas. Complete with basic beats and weak vocals, this record thoroughly boring and unimpressive. (EH)

Paper Bag Records, Ste. 306, 455 Spadina Ave., Toronto, ON M5S 2G8, Canada, www.paperbagrecords.com

Farm Crew - Some Other Now, CD

I've listened to this a few times now, and I still don't know what to make of it. Off the wall hip-hop that covers seemingly every base: smooth tracks, harsher ones, more electronic ones and so on. I like diversity, but sometimes you need to reign it in. (DH)

Naivete, 1341 W. Fullerton, #322, Chicago, IL 60614-2362, www.naivete.com

Fiction, The - I Told Her That I Like Living In a Box, CD

I Told Her... is a relatively standard hardcore record that leans more toward the finger-pointing late '80s and early '90s rather than today's throaty, more metallic sound. As for the band's take on Joy Division's "Ceremony," I'd recommend that in the future The Fiction avoid messing with the classics. (MS)

Level Plane Records, PO Box 7926 Charlottesville, VA 22906 www.level-plane.com

A Five And Dime Ship - The Way It Would All End, 2xCD

It's recommended that pet owners leave a radio softly playing when you leave home so animals feel like they're still surrounded by company. This double-record of instrumentals, placed into a shuffling two-disc changer, would give ambitious felines a chance to air guitar: lots of passionate, repetitive down-strumming during interlude flurries. (SM)

Self-released, www.afiveanddimeship.com

Flamingo 50 - My Reason, CD

This is great, stripped down punk rock the way it's supposed to be: energetic, fun and aggressive. Flamingo 50's female-fronted trio sounds like Superchunk did before they veered into indie rock. I'm going to push this awesome CD on my friends because you just don't hear it like this anymore. (DM)

Keith, 23A Lancaster Ave., Sefton Park, Liverpool, L17 3A, UK, www.keithrecords.net

🔪 Flogging Molly - Within A Mile Of Home, CD

Flogging Molly is bigger than The Beatles now. Ubiquitous adverts for this record line Los Angeles like the warm smog that engulfs it. A worthwhile gamble for the band, as *Within A Mile Of Home* is the strongest album they've released to date. No longer falling prey to the same insistent drumbeat, the band branches out successfully musically. Dave King pens some of his best songs in what has become the first paddy rock album I've listened to not requiring a run through of The Pogues' Rum, Sodomy And The Lash as a recovery. (RL)

SideOneDummy, www.sideonedummy.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gooder (JG)

Dead Moon, Unknown Territory. Dead Moon is the essence of rock 'n' roll, boiled down and distilled to a concentrated form. It is bare bones: a singer who plays guitar, his wife who plays bass and a drummer. Their records are so raw that someone who was producing one of their albums (made by lead singer and guitarist Fred Cole's record company) thought there was something wrong with the master disc until Fred Cole told him that was how it was supposed to sound. Working within the confines of the trio form and low production, Dead Moon makes music that bleeds with pain, sadness and anger. This album is one of their best; lo-fi punk numbers alternate with bluesy ballads, and Fred Cole's banshee wails will raise the hair on the back of your neck. Dead Moon are still touring even though they are grandparents in their 50s, but you wouldn't know it.

Currently spinning: 1. The Gits, *Enter The Conquering Chicken*; 2. The Briefs, *Sex Objects*; 3. The Leaving Trains, *Sleeping Underwater Survivors*; 4. P.J. Harvey, *Uh Huh Her*; 5. The Sonics, *Boom*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Emily Hausman (EH)

Iceburn, Hephaestus. This is arguably one of the most overlooked records of the early '90s, probably due to the fact that it was released on Revelation Records, which at the time was a predominantly straightedge hardcore label. But Hephaestus sounds as fresh now as it did when it was released. Named after the Greek god of fire, Hephaestus was also the patron of all craftsmen, especially those working with metals—and metal is exactly what you get with this record. Not speed metal, but the brand of metal that Black Sabbath served up: nice and heavy. The first song, "Iron," is based on the chords F and E (the periodic table of elements symbol for iron). Gentry Densely is truly a guitar magician. Think Albini, think math, and think all around fucked up and pissed. Don't think that you can listen to this record and skip through tracks; listen to it as a whole, as it is a long, strange journey. If you have never heard Iceburn and want something new to listen to, pick it up. It won't disappoint. Anyone could find something that they like about this record.

Rockin' my world lately: 1. The Explosion, *Black Tape*, 2. Minus The Bear, *This Is What I Know About Being Gigantic*, 3. Hot Water Music, *The New What Next*, 4. The Locust, *Plague Soundscapes*, 5. Bad Wizard, *Free And Easy*.

**Floor – Dove, CD**

Put this on and feel the bottom drop out of the room. This is a sort of lost album, as it was recorded ten years ago but never released. The absolute low-end guitar assault and wide-open drumming isn't as honed as Floor's previous full-length, but it's engaging just the same. (RR)

No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604-4636, www.noidearecords.com

Floorbirds – The Sea Of Language Around Us, CDEP

These five songs of faint energy, like the knock of a pulse against a wrist untouched, build to crests that taper suddenly. It takes a while to get to the gratification as you slave for the countrified payoff. (SM)

Self-released, www.floorbirds.com

Fonzie – Wake Up Call, CD

Fonzie is the type of band few grown-ups would admit to liking, but they're really fun nonetheless. They play overproduced pop-punk, with scientifically perfect delivery. The CD is enhanced, with videos featuring nice fight sequences and stunts. (AE)

Transdreamer Records, PO Box 1955, New York, NY 10113, www.transdreamer.com

For The Worse – The Chaos Continues, CD

This fucking rips! I reviewed their first EP and loved every track, and this doesn't disappoint either. Straight-forward, fast, old-school hardcore with quasi-political lyrics, but still not very serious. I could listen to this all day. (TK)

Bridge Nine, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

For This I Have Fallen – Ubertima Fides, The Winter Diaries, CD

This is definitely not my thing. I could picture these guys on Headbangers Ball—they're more nü metal than hardcore. They mention God a lot, but I can't tell if they're for or against it. If you like nü metal, you can have my copy of this album. (DA)

Saint Noxa / self-released, PO Box 514, Ringwood, IL 60072, www.forthisihavefallen.com

Forty Fives, The – Shake / One After 909, 7"

Side A is an inferior version of an Otis Redding tune. Side B is an inferior version of a Beatles tune. The lesson here: Don't mess with the masters unless you're gonna come correct. (AJ)

Chicken Ranch Records, PO Box 9909, Austin, TX 78766, www.chickenranchrecords.com

Four Deadly Questions – S/T, 7"

This 7" is as lyrically deep as a Sham 69 reunion with a mix as clean as Malcom McLaren. A prime example of how horrible three easy chords and some words can be. (RL)

GC Records, PO Box 3806, Fullerton, CA 92834, www.gcrecords.com

Foxhole – We The Wintering Tree, CD

I really want to like this band because of their packaging, which involves apparently hand-silkscreened covers and liner notes. The music is soft and lilting, Bedhead-esque, with some beautiful instrumentation. Also,

it's dedicated to Jesus Christ, so keep that in mind in case you're not a fan of Him. (JG)

Selah Records, www.selah-records.com

Freeze, The – Freak Show / Crawling Blind, CD

Root note, palm mutes, terrace shouting and Johnny Thunders-copped solos for 68:05 minutes. This could be cool (see The Riverboat Gamblers) or this could be hell. This band fits into the latter. (RL)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

From The Ashes – Mind Bortex, CD

Sometimes I think the world would be better off if all grindcore bands combined into one huge Voltron-esque collective. Said super (hero) group would put out three or four records a year in order to satiate the diehards' necessity for incoherent Cookie Monster vocals and spastic, machine-gun drumming. In the end, the world would be a much better, more cost effective place for us all. Until my glorious plan comes to pass, albums like *Mind Bortex* will continue to be released to a small but thriving contingency of people who can listen to such noise without developing an urge to throw themselves out of a window. To quote the always sage Simpsons Comic Book Guy: "Most cliché hardcore band name ever!" (MS)

Acoustic Trauma, PO Box 159 92061 Getafe (Madrid) Spain, www.theacoustictrauma.com

Funeral Dress – A Way of Life, CD

Belgium's Funeral Dress has been playing street punk for more than 15 years, but they're just now getting known stateside. From their goofy cover of Men At Work's "Down Under" to classics of their own such as "Party On" and "Spirit Of The Streets," this album is a thoroughly solid demonstration of gutter verve. They have a lot in common with their Euro counterparts Klasse Kriminale, but are harder and catchier. One of the songs features guest vocals from the female singer from Banner Of Hope. There are also three live songs, recorded at CBGB on one of their U.S. tours. Lyrically, most U.S. street-punk bands get accused of ESL-isms, but this band has an excuse since English truly isn't really their native tongue. Funeral Dress is a fun, silly, guilty pleasure that you need to check out. (AE)

SOS Records, PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92878, www.sosrecords.us

Gabriel, Joshua – S/T, CD

Elements of hip hop, electronica, rock and spoken word come together on Joshua Gabriel's new record, creating a unique sound that's inevitably hit or miss. "Welcome to the END OF THE WORLD" and "I know you know" should be required listening material; the rest is merely a tease. (BN)

14B Records / self-released, www.joshuagabriel.com

Garmonbozia – S/T, 12"

Generic hardcore with a cello player. Overall, this is just like any other crust band...but with a cellist. Some cool and personal lyrics aren't nearly enough to redeem what just seems like a bad idea, but at least they're

trying something new, which is always worth a few points. (DH)

Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profaneexistence.com

Gasoline Fight – Useless Piece Of Weaponry, CDEP

This all-star band features guys from Small Brown Bike, Sweep The Leg Johnny and Peralta. Gasoline Fight sounds like a Chicago band: noisy rock with cool, dissonant guitar lines and an experimental slant. I loved the guitars on this one, but the singer's vocals lessened the music for me. (KM)

Thick Records, PO Box 351899, Los Angeles, CA 90035-1899, www.thickrecords.com

Gatsby's American Dream – The Land Of Lost Monsters, CDEP

"Where's the fucking chorus?" Gatsby's American Dream asks this question a couple of times on this seven-song EP, its last for Chicago's LLL Records. (An album on Fearless is due next year.) With some nice guitar work, fancy keyboards and lyrical references to dinosaurs, Gatsby's American Dream has a lot of things going for it. But the act can sometimes be too clever for its own good. It's one thing to fiddle with song structure and forgo a chorus, but another entirely to self-consciously draw attention to this fact. Where's the chorus? I don't know, but a few more hooks would be nice. (TM)

LLR Recordings, www.llrrecords.com

GBH – Cruel & Unusual, CD

I wish this album were called *Cruel & Unfortunate*, 'cause then my review could be "It's cruel of GBH to keep putting out records, and unfortunate that I gotta hear 'em." (JC)

Idol Records, PO Box 720043, Dallas, TX 75372, www.idolrecords.com

General Rudie – Take Your Place, CD

Rigid ska music that lacks the groove and feel necessary to come through. Way too straight-laced and, basically, boring. (AJ)

Stomp Records, 78 Rachel E. Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1C6, Canada, www.stomprecords.com

Gerbs, The – Skaotic Program, CD

Snotty French ska-punk. Sample lyric from "Born In The U.S.A.": "Daddy killed children in Vietnam / My brother was friendly fire's victim during Iraq Freedom / Fuck the U.S.A." Oh, come on. The French have been involved in colonialism and slave trading since the dawn of time. All the sudden they're morally superior? Whatever. (AJ)

Hyena Records, SRP ASSO c/o The Gerbs, BP 90948, 60009 Beauv Ais Cedex, France, www.hyenarecords.com

GFK – If Liberty Isn't Given, It Should Be Taken, CD

As with anything released on G7, the lyrics (some in French), are all heavily political. GFK have been playing for more than eight years, and this is their fourth album. Their style of hardcore is heavily influenced by metal and crossover bands. Now and then they throw in a great melodic breakdown, but for the most part, there is nothing exciting musically. Apart from that, they do have a lot to say and a great vehicle to promote their

Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

Cannibal Corpse, The Bleeding. No, I'm not kidding. Cannibal's fourth record, *The Bleeding*, was a brilliant follow-up to their landmark *Tomb Of The Mutilated* and still knocks my socks off to this day. Often underrated songwriters, Cannibal Corpse could (and still can) write a riff that will stick with you forever. A collaborative effort that saw primary songwriter and bassist Alex Webster getting help from founding guitarist Jack Owen and newcomer Rob Barrett (Malevolent Creation), this record has so many catchy riffs it's almost unfair. Take a look past the obvious misogyny and horror-style lyrics of vocalist Chris Barnes (this record was to be his last), and you'll hear some of the best death metal riffs put on tape. "Stripped, Raped, And Strangled," and "The Pick Axe Murders" are just two examples of guitar work sure to get jaded metal fans nodding their heads violently, though the lyrics are completely outlandish. The goal is obviously to create the musical equivalent of a slasher flick, but songs like "She Was Asking For It" and "Force Fed Broken Glass" can't help but make me laugh. The technicality that the band now thrives on was hinted at here, but the group remained musically grounded to death-metal basics for the majority of the album, even letting a straight up three-chord punk-rock style shine through at times. A record written by guys obviously trying to make the most brutal and fun to play music, *The Bleeding* is one that I could listen to on repeat indefinitely.

I came back, I brought my axe: Pig Destroyer, *Terrifier*; De La Soul, *Three Feet High And Rising*; Pete Rock and CL Smooth, *Mecca And The Soul Brother*; Helmet, *Meantime*; Greg Hudalla, *Demo '04*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Don Irwin (DI)

Tattle Tale, Sew True. First off, I've taken a lot of heat over the years for liking this CD. "Why are you listening to that lesbian Indigo Girls-type music?" In the band's defense, it's really good and holds the test of time. Madigan Shive and Jen Wood made up Tattle Tale playing acoustic guitars, cello and drums while still in a suburban Seattle high school. It would be a couple years before I heard their music. The cello is an effective tool in creating rock 'n' roll angst and passion. If you pull the bow the wrong direction, it's as if you had a guitar squeaking at 11 on a Marshall half stack. *Sew True* was their second collection of songs, but it was a cassette only release. By high school graduation, they had broken up, and I never got to see them play live. Their song lyrics are typical riot girl stuff, capturing youth's last innocence, 40-year-old sage retrospection and revolution without the masculine hardcore bravado. The first TT music I heard was by chance on a farm in the middle of Quebec's wilderness among some anarchists and trees during sunset. It wasn't until afterward that I realized it was Jen Wood playing music by the campfire.

Now playing on my iPod and car stereo: Vic Bondi with J. and Darren; DJ Ben Watt; Stinking Lizaveta, *Caught Between Worlds* (reviewed this issue).

opinions. I just hope they included a lyric sheet in their actual release, as there wasn't one with this promo. (TK)

67 Welcoming Committee, PO Box 27006, 360 Main St. Concourse, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

🔪 Gibby Haynes And His Problem – S/T, CD

You've got two choices: Buy this slab of psychedelic pop-rock insanity, or drop LSD and listen to an mid-period Beatles record. The results will be about the same. Haynes delivers a cleaned up, but not sterilized, version of what was great about the Butthole Surfers in their prime. It's nowhere near as mind-blowingly chaotic, but it's as warped as the Butthole's best stuff but in a pop-rock symphonic mind fuck kind of a way. Sample a few lines from the song "Superman": "Superman has killer weed / he gets it from Dan Rather... everything is super, man." It's nowhere near the maniacal glory of *Locust Abortion Technician*, but what else is? (RR)

Surfdog Records, 1126 South Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, CA 92024, www.surfdogmusic.com

🔪 Girlyman – Remember Who I Am, CD

Girlyman's perfectly matched harmonies, the timbre of the percussion, and delicate acoustic guitar melodies are absolutely endearing; but this record is, largely, for new school folk enthusiasts. Otherwise their innovative takes on the traditional folk song and their good-natured charm will be meaningless. (CC)

Daemon Records, www.daemonrecords.com

🔪 Go Find, The – Miami, CD

Akin to that Postal Service vibe, *Miami* is a good mix of sharp pop songs that puts the beats in the right places. Dieter Sermeus' vocals, at times effected and distorted, aren't as squeaky clean as The Postal Service's Gibbard, but are nevertheless very suitable for his indie-pop melodies and comfortable, pillowy rhythms. (AJA)

Morr Music, Postfach 550141, 10371 Berlin, www.morrmusic.com

🔪 Gone All Summer – Meanwhile... Back In The Real World, CD

This lively pop, or should I say power-pop-influenced release from Chicago is a relatively layered album. The production is slick, but made gritty after the fact with interesting effects and more distortion than is customary for melodic punk. Workable, but you can also work around it if you like. (AE)

Self-released, www.goneallsummer.com

🔪 Gorilla Monsoon – S/T, CD

Weird hodge-podge of noise punk, hardcore and doom metal tied together with samples from old school WWF wrestling programs. I guess the band's infatuated with announcer Gorilla Monsoon or something. Cool to hear these wild rants by Hulk Hogan and Jesse Ventura again. That stuff's more interesting than the music. (AJ)

Tuolumne Records, PO Box 320-340, Brooklyn, NY 11232, www.tuolumnerecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

Green River, Come On Down. This one ain't for everybody. It's not that *Come On Down* is a challenging album or that Green River is an art-rock band. It's just heavy rock music. The *Come On Down* EP was recorded in late '84, right around the time Black Flag was creepy crawling through *My War*, and bands like Saint Vitus and The Melvins were infusing metal into the indie underground. Following in that spirit, these six tunes are all about dark, chugging riffs and song structures that twist, turn and burst—kind of like The Germs playing material from Alice Cooper's motor city days. Yeah, a lot of people think of Green River as a "stepping stone" band full of future members of Mudhoney and Mother Love Bone (which later morphed into Pearl Jam—stop right there, because comparing Pearl Jam to Green River is like comparing Ozzy's solo bunk to Black Sabbath). But Green River had its own distinct sound, best captured on this, their first release. For my money, Mark Arm has never sounded better than he does here, belting out monsters like "Swallow My Pride," "Corner Of My Eye" and "Tunnel Of Love" in his trademark slurred howl. The band's a bit loose, but man, do they pour themselves into it, bashing away like their lives are on the line. Green River's other excellent EP, *Dry As A Bone*, and their only full-length, the somewhat flawed *Rehab Doll*, are available on one CD and may be an easier find than this one.

These are cool too: Venomous Concept, S/T; Black Sabbath, *Past Lives*; The Sex Maniacs, *Mean As Hell*; 50 Foot Wave, S/T; Th' Legendary Shack Shakers, *Believe* (reviewed this issue).

Reviewer Spotlight: Scott Jones (SJ)

Electric Frankenstein, Monster. The many records of Electric Frankenstein are really hit or miss, but thankfully *Monster* is one record that is definitely a hit. And when I say "hit," I'm not talkin' about some Top-40 hit. I mean hit like this music hits you square in the nuts. These boys rock! EF's mammoth guitar sound can sometimes go to waste on albums of weaker material, but on this record the catchy (but still rockin') songs put the wall of noise to good use. "Naked Heat" starts things out with a riff that quickly lets you know these guys rock for a living. Next up is "Blackout," which is probably the best EF-penned song here. "I ain't no good for you / do what you wanna do," Rik L Rik screams over the verse riff, all the while keeping his cool as the band launches into a Ramones-inspired six-beat chorus. If Elvis were alive today, I'm sure he would take his turn singing for this band. The cover of the *Fun Things* "Savage" turns into a diesel-fueled barroom force to be reckoned with in these guys' hands. Finally they end with "Queen Wasp," by the Misfits of course. The drummer sings this one, and he makes it all his own rather than emulate Glenn Danzig. This is toe-tappin', head bobbin', get-up-and-shake-your-ass music in all its glory. (SJ)

Are you prepared to rock?: Turbonegro, *Scandinavian Leather*; Motorhead, *The Very Best Of...; Zeke, Til' The Livin' End*; New Bomb Turks, *The Night Before The Day The Earth Stood Still*.

🔪 Grannies, The – Erected Lady Man, CD

The Grannies are a cross-dressing, garagey punk band from San Francisco in the vein of The Trash Brats. They're funny, tasteless and rock-in'. Highlights include "Homo Moment," "Crap My Dress," "Crank The Suck" and one of the better covers of The Undertones' "Teenage Kicks" recorded so far. (AE)

Wondertaker, PO Box 470153, San Francisco, CA 94147, www.wondertaker.com

🔪 Great Redneck Hope, The – Behold The Fuck Thunder, CD

I was lukewarm on this band's first release, but this one packs more of a punch. With most songs clocking in at under one minute, they have definitely grown into their own as a good spazzy, crunchy and very schizophrenic band. Their song titles are also fantastic. (DH)

Thinker Thought Records, 1002 Devonshire Rd, Washington, IL 61571, www.thinkerthoughtwrong.com

🔪 Greenlight Grenade – S/T, CD

The two drummers in this four-piece band pound out the percussive output of an octopus. The off-kilter guitar and throbbing bass round out an intensity of sound that's reminiscent of The Constantines and Fugazi, though adding a math-rock element to the malleability of these songs. This album combines two earlier EPs, *The Fallacy Of Composition* and *The Focus Shifts* from Impact To Survival, but it sounds like a complete album rather than two projects slapped together. The vocals are sharp, both in delivery and lyrics. This band from Fullerton, Calif., is intense and certainly gets the fingers tapping and head nodding. (BA)

Brother Jonathan Records / self-released, PO Box 4325, Fullerton, CA 92034-4325

🔪 Guitar Wolf – Loverock, CD

Extreme lo-fi: sloppy, fast guitars; screaming, distorted vocals. This is Guitar Wolf, a Japanese rock band that play as poorly as possible, but still manage to make an outstanding album. Everybody I play it for wants a burned copy. Although I can't explain why, it works. (JJG)

Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

🔪 Guttermouth – Eat Your Face, CD

Despite the Discharge-looking cover art, this is the same old Guttermouth: slightly metallic pop punk that defined the Epitaph sound in the '90s. The vocals remind me of the singer of the Vandals with the playfulness of Jello Biafra at times. But the only political topic they tackle is pretty much denouncing politics. Slightly dumb and proudly un-PC, but not that bad as a remnant of the old SoCal sound. (NS)

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

🔪 Halfwayhome – A Brand New Subdivision, CD

Complicated post-hardcore riffs and the eradication of pop in emo are the mission of Halfwayhome. They seem to be on the path to success with

this full-length that will go over well with those who like aggressive emo core. It sounds like there are 18 guitars—it's that full. (AE)

The Death Scene, 8642 Bay Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11214, www.thedeathscene.com

🔪 Hawthorne Heights – The Silence In Black And White, CD

Chunky emo/hardcore with two vocalists: One does the overly dramatic whine à la Dashboard Confessional, while the other singer handles the tortured scream. The music is pretty decent, though. The soft parts are intricate and lush, and the hard parts are driving and catchy. Too bad the vocals are so annoying. (NS)

Victory, 346 N. Justine Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

🔪 Heaton, Angie – Let It Ride, CD

Angie Heaton lays it all out without the melodrama. She's honest and careful in what she expresses through her lyrics; she is thoughtful, rather than wounded. *Let It Ride* is made up of Heaton's country-influenced folk and a few upbeat pop tunes that were some of the strongest songs on the album. On her twang-flecked ballads, Heaton's voice breaks at points, unable to completely finish a line, making the songs more personal, but not awkward. Together with these more slowly paced singer/songwriter jaunts, Heaton puts together a couple of really enjoyable up-tempo pop-rock songs ("Let It Ride" and "Olyvia Smiles") that break up the album and add some noticeable hopefulness and fun to the seriousness of love songs and reflective acoustic-led dirges. (AJA)

Parasol, 303 W. Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

🔪 Hecker, Tim – Mirages, CD

Canadians sure do love ambient music. This CD is a lovely soundscape of tape hiss, drifting keyboards and other tapestries for late-light listening. After being on a Tangerine Dream kick lately, *Mirage* will fit on my CD rotation just fine. (DI)

Alien8Recordings, 4060 Boul. St. Laurent #602B, Montreal, QC, H2W 1Y9, Canada, www.alien8recordings.com

🔪 Heiruspecs – A Tiger Dancing, CD

"I don't hate on anyone, but I do have extremely high standards for art." The declaration comes near the start of the sophomore effort from St. Paul, Minn., hip-hop trio Heiruspecs. The act lives up to the promise, with old-school rhythms and high-minded rhymes, touching on everything from joining the military to taking care of a cat. For fans of Atmosphere, Murs and Sage Francis, the Heiruspecs are a fine addition to the "emo" hip-hop movement. (TM)

Razor & Tie, 214 Sullivan Street, 4A New York, NY 10012-1354, www.razorandtie.com

🔪 Hell Or Highwater – Live Long And Suffer, CDEP

HOH play politically charged pop punk with a good male vocals and mediocre guitar solos in their short songs. I would guess that they really like



Bad Religion because they definitely have that sound to them. (EH)
Self-released, www.hellorhighwatermusic.com

Hentchmen, The – Form Follows Function, CD

This roots-rock band has some good melodies, but the songs are hampered by the singer's weak voice and mediocre lyrics. Despite some interesting synth accompaniment, the songs seem too predictable overall, and the band is never able to hit the mark as a down-and-dirty rock band. (JJG)
Times Beach Records, 118 E. Seventh St., Royal Oak, MI 48067, www.timesbeachrecords.com

HeyMike! – Embrace Your Hooks, CDEP

HeyMike! play new-school emo, which isn't my favorite type of music, but I have to admit that these guys are quite good at what they do. They are tight with strong hooks and the vocals aren't too whiney. (SJ)
Takeover Records, 2069 N Argyle #305, Hollywood, CA 90068, www.takeoverrock.com

Hidden Hand / Woolly Mammoth – Night Letter, split 12"

Hidden Hand play two great songs on this EP recorded by bassist Bruce Falkenburg. Woolly Mammoth play some deep '70s rock—I picture their name with big, hairy animals that move slowly. The guitars are really big, and keyboards round out the sound on "Mastercut And Charisma." (DI)
McCarthyism, 7209 25th Ave., Hyattsville, MD 20783-2752, www.mccarthyrism.org

Hirudin – Neither Created Nor Destroyed, CDEP

Hirudin's noisy post-punk suffers from vocals that sound unnatural and forced. They seem to be trying to capture the DC post-punk sound in wrenching their vocals, but it ends up sounding too contrived. Sadly, too, their clever lyrics get lost in messy guitars and songwriting that just doesn't jive. (AJA)
Intermediate Swing Records/self-released, 2834 W. Palmer St., #209, Chicago, IL 60647, www.hirudin.net

His & Her Vanities – A Thought Process, CD

His & Her Vanities' quirky, deep-toned rock manages to be irresistible and genuine. Their double-time drums and bright vocals are steered by buoyant bass and lead guitar lines that fall into an off-kilter harmony. A couple of tracks slide into a disjointed mess, but the band's charisma is consistent. (CC)
Science of Sound, PO Box 14573, Madison, WI 53708, www.scienceofsound.com

History (Invades) – Video Men We Are, 7"

It's a shame that these guys aren't part of Dischord because they'd unquestionably help improve the Washington D.C. label's bottom line with hand-warming guitar lines that are monstrously original even by math standards. That guitar's a powerful force, and it's all you listen for when these guys get started. (SM)
Makebreak Records, PO Box 17827, Seattle, WA 98127, www.makebreakrecords.com

Hodges, Josh — Sexton Blake, CD

A couple of things first: Apparently this Josh Hodges character had an

entertainment lawyer before he had a record out. And this entertainment lawyer (if you trust entertainment lawyers' opinions) was so enamored of Josh Hodges record, so sayeth the lore, that he *quit being a lawyer to start a record label!* (Insert standard lawyer joke here.) Also, this record is apparently the score or fake soundtrack to a film called Sexton Blake, which seems, like, highly conceptual. As for the music, it's actually pretty good: melodic, minimalistically electronic with soft and lilting vocals. (JG)
In Music We Trust, 15213 S.E. Bevington Ave., Portland, OR 97267, www.inmusicwetrust.com

Hot Water Music – The New What Next, CD

Having been at it for ten years, HWM are in a tough position: If they make another *Forever And Counting*, people will say they're treading water. But if they modify their sound at all, people will think they're has-beens. Apparently The New What Next falls in the latter category. HWM purists have apparently dismissed this record as yet more proof that the band is but a shell of its former self. As a relative late-comer to the HWM party, I don't mind. Yes, The New... is apparently slower and less punk ("Ebb And Flow"). Overall it sounds like more aggressive post-punk, as in opener "Keep It Together." However, the intensity is still there ("Poison"), and the record actually picks up toward the end, beginning with ninth track. I'd say HWM are honing their craft here because The New What Next has a certain maturity to it, but that doesn't mean it lacks an edge or skimps on the rock. "Giver" is easily up there with any of the more aggressive tracks the band has written over the past few years. I don't know what to make of the album title, but if The New What Next is a harbinger for HWM's—or anyone else's—records to come, I certainly won't complain. (KR)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

I Can Lick Any Sonofabitch In The House – Menace, CD

Angry, political, left-wing country rock from Oregon. No, seriously. Get this just to sing along to the line "Fuck Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church." (RR)
In Music We Trust Records, 15213 SE Bevington Ave., Portland, OR 97267, www.inmusicwetrust.com

I Killed The Prom Queen – When Goodbye Means Forever, CD

Just because you are from Australia doesn't excuse you for your stupid fucking band name. The closest description of their sound would be if Hatebreed became an emo band. Yeah, the music sounds as good as their name. (TK)
Hand of Hope, PO Box 24913, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.handofhoperecords.com

In Arm's Reach – S/T, 7"

This European hardcore 7" with English lyrics plays like a sampling of all of today's popular hardcore sounds, with an emphasis on power-violence and slower, '80s-influenced NYHC. They get a little dark and

nearly metallic at times. It's fun because it isn't stuck in just one of hardcore's subdivisions. (AE)

Anger Management Records, Nijvelsbaan 161 - 3060 Korbek - Dijle, Belgium, www.am-records.com

In Control – S/T, CDEP

At first I was put off by the tough guy sound of jud-jud guitars and slow breakdowns. It did pick up a bit after the first song, and I started liking their faster tracks, getting into the Nardcore. "Kayfabe Memories" has an awesome melodic breakdown that finally won me over. (TK)
Rival Records, PO Box 5242, Concord, CA 94524, www.rivalrecords.net

Insomniacs, The – Switched On, CD

One of the longest running and most overlooked bands on Estrus, The Insomniacs play shimmering, authentic mod/pop with a pinch of psychedelic fuzz thrown in for good measure. Every song sounds like a lost '60s gem, and *Switched On* both begs for and benefits from repeat listening. (JC)
Estrus Records, PO Box 2124, Bellingham, WA 98227, www.estrus.com

Intelligence – Boredom And Terror, 12"

Electro-ish garage rock with a hard political slant. Some of the guitar tones and drum machine stuff reminded me of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, even though they sound nothing alike. Totally lo-fi and dirty sounding. Meh. Comes with a CD of ten "bonus" songs that were more of the same. (DH)
Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor, Ste. 3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

Isis – Panopticon, CD

I was both excited and frustrated that I had to review *Panopticon* for this issue, as the time that I'm provided to listen and analyze a pile of records is good enough for most bands, but not Isis. Their earlier works were more straightforward: crushing and smashing with a hint of drone. Then, there was *Celestial*, which I enjoyed immediately. The follow-up, *Oceanic*, disappointed me at first, but I came to love after many months and listens. So, here we are at their newest platter of sprawling, sparse music. It's slow, there's some crunch, there's a lot of melody, and it seems like it was recorded in the middle of the ocean. There's a very stranded feel to *Panopticon*, and while I'm a little unsure of how cold the water is, I'm sure that I'll warm up to it soon enough. This band has yet to fail me, so I'm just going to give it some more time. (DH)
Ipecac, PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563, www.ipecac.com

Iskra – S/T, 12"

In 100 years, people are going to look back on the music that was being made at this point in American history and ask, "What the fuck was their leader doing that made so many so pissed off?" I'd toss this record into a time capsule if I could, because these guys are fucking pissed. Insane hardcore with tons of distortion, speed and some of the best straight-up

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

The Reds, *S/T*. After listening to the new Marked Men record, *On The Outside*, about a billion times, I decided that I just had to say a little something special about the band that started it all. The Reds play raw and dirty garage/punk in the same vein as Teenegenerate, but faster and without the broken English. Fast and energetic rock 'n' roll energy in every song, accented by high-pitched vocals and random catchy hooks thrown in. I have never heard anyone say that they dislike The Reds. There is an awesome cover of the Urinals' "I'm A Bug," even though their track listing says they are covering "Ack, Ack, Ack." Having just seen the Urinals live, I would have to say they do it even better. Thirteen songs, only breaking the two-minute mark twice. My favorite track on here is "I Hate Rules," to which I can personally relate. I hope anyone who hasn't yet heard The Reds, or for that matter, the even better band that formed in their wake, the Marked Men, you should go out and start buying those records. You won't be let down.

What am I listening to? Love Songs, *All Branches No Trunk*; Conga Fury, *Chaotic Noise*; Modern Machines, *Taco Blessing*; Thor/Thor and the Ass Boys, split 7"; Clorox Girls, *Weekend Rowdies* (working title) fucking awesome rough mix recorded by Chris Woodhouse at "the Hanger" in Sacto.

Reviewer Spotlight: Ryan Leach (RL)

The *Compulsive Gamblers*, *Crystal Gazing Luck Amazing*. Greg Cartwright has graced his fair share of vinyl. As the figurehead of The Oblivians, he churned out treble-drenched rockers on \$50 guitars, in recording conditions similar to Hazel Adkins. By the mid-'90s he started up his old band, The Compulsive Gamblers, and delivered their final studio album, *Crystal Gazing Luck Amazing*, in '99 (inadvertently, their best). While still abiding by his minimalist principles, Cartwright apparently found better recording equipment and a stronger sense of melody for The Gamblers. More retrospective in their approach, *Crystal Gazing* brings the alt-country sound of "Two Thieves." Always a fan of girl groups (see The Oblivians' cover of Little Eva's "Locomotion"), the Gamblers bring the Shadow Morton-esque "Stop & Think It Over," quite possibly the best girl-group song not recorded in the '60s or by a girl group. Not to be excluded are Cartwright's familiar garage-eyed soul numbers: Opener, "The Way I Feel About You," starts off something like this: "1.2.3.4! GOOD GOD MY SOUL / YOU'RE RIPPING EVERYTHING OFF / LET'S GIVE HIM A HAND!" (or something like that). In between Cartwright's originals are the obligatory obscure covers (always fun). Combining all of these elements together is Cartwright's stellar songwriting and thorough understanding of rock 'n' roll.

Current discs of vinyl and the (literal) killers of 45s: John Cale, *Vintage Violence*; The Willowz, *S/T*; Oblivians, *Best of the Worst* ('93-'97); Interpol, *Antics*; The Sonics, *Maintaining My Cool*.

screaming I've heard in some time. The record also comes with a detailed booklet that includes song explanations as well as a boatload of political links that you can check out on the Internet. This band completely shreds, and as an added bonus, their logo is almost illegible! (DH)
 Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profanexistence.com

Itch, The – 14 Ways To Make Friends And Influence People, CD

The front cover includes the following quote: "This past Friday night I saw The Itch...all joking aside, they were quite possibly the WORST band I've ever seen." I've not had the opportunity to see them live, but after listening to this CD that quote seems entirely plausible. Crummy bar-rock punk. (JC)
 Wee Rock Records, PO Box 333, Springfield, MO 65801, www.weerockrecords.com

J. Neo Marvin & The Content Providers – Freedom Fried, CD

J. Neo is hard to nail down. As the CD title hints, this is a conceptual statement based on current events. It is also a mellow musical experience with strings, saxophones and keyboards. I like the songs and clever lyrics. (DI)
 Ear Candle Productions / self-released, PO Box 170357, San Francisco, CA 94117, www.jneommarvin.com

J-Zone – A Job Ain't Nuthin But Work, CD

Ah, the great philosopher Mr. J-Zone, chiding us with his unique insights: Doth protest J-Zone, a job ain't nothing but work. So true. Also true: J-Zone's fifth album is just some more crappy washed up hip-hop. (JG)
 Fat Beats Records, www.fatbeats.com

Joan Of Arc – Joan Of Arc, Dick Cheney, Mark Twain..., CD

Perhaps the finest effort from Joan of Arc. Moving from their emo and indie-rock base, they tread into orchestral pop experiments built with piano, cello and viola, and some vibes. It's not a perfect game, but the result is an intriguing, complex yet light-natured work. (BA)
 Polyvinyl, PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Joe Jitsu – Start It Up, CD

This happy/bittersweet, melodic pop/punk is the kind of overplayed stuff I usually don't like. But I liked this. It's not rocket science, but Joe Jitsu have made a solid album; the singer has a good voice, the band sounds tight, and the melodies are enjoyable if not original. (JIG)
 Top Five Records, 155 Allen St., #41, Lumberton, TX 77657, www.listen.to/topfiverecords

Johnson, Michael – Nonsense Goes Mudslide, CD

This album has it all: quiet acoustic rock, experimental noise pop, catchy indie rock and various blips and bleeps. It seems Johnson tried his hand at every type of instrument and sound effect he could find. It should be horrible, but the album has its moments. (MP)
 Must Delicious, www.mustdelicious.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Todd Martens (TM)

The Afghan Whigs, Black Love. Greg Dulli is a bit of blowhard. Whether leading his former band The Afghan Whigs or fronting current group the Twilight Singers, Dulli's misogynistic act is all swagger—he thinks he's the toughest, coolest, hottest cat in town, and he's full of it. In 1996, The Afghan Whigs released *Black Love*, and it was generally regarded as one of the group's biggest disappointments. The band was starting to move away from the aggressive rock of its early days, and was bringing its soul and R&B influences to the fore. Dulli's lyrics on *Black Love* were never more blunt—full of references to crime, the devil, suicide and infidelity—and each cut plays out like noir film cliché. Songs such as "Crime Scene Part One," "Blame, Etc." and "Going to Town" are part dime-store novel, and part Motown. Rick McCollum's guitars run around Dulli like a subway rat, and John Curley's bass plays like a tribute to Sly Stone's Larry Graham. *Black Love* remains the Whigs' most-crafted and least-belligerent album, and it's over-the-top, nevertheless so than on album finale "Faded." A late-night cabaret piano carries the melody, which is flamboyantly decorated with angelic backing-vocals and McCollum's police siren guitar. Dulli uses the ballad to wail like he's never wailed before, the wounded bastard who wants to atone for his sins. It's a bit ornate, but it's also the first time the Whigs created a soundtrack that could match Dulli's ego.

Stuff that doesn't suck: Green Day's *American Idiot*; Sons & Daughters' *Love The Cup*; !!!'s *Louden Up Now*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

Sonic Youth, Experimental Jet Set, Trash And No Star. Most Sonic Youth Fans would hardly consider *Experimental Jet Set* one of Sonic Youth's finer moments, but this album holds a special place in my heart. Being younger than a good deal of *Punk Planet*'s other reviewers, I got into punk rock through the '90s alterna-rock explosion. Back then bands like Sonic Youth, Helium and Pavement got some daytime play on MTV, and kids all over were exposed to the underground from the comfort of their living room couch. I can still remember watching the video for "Bull In The Heather" and seeing Kathleen Hanna dancing around the band. Recently, I was in the mood to listen to some of my older records, and after putting this one on, I found I enjoyed all the off-kilter noise and weirdness more than ever. Maybe I'm just being nostalgic, but I'm surprised this album has stood the test of time (almost 10 years) for me, as it's often cited as one of their less-inspired albums. If someone asked me to recommend a Sonic Youth album, I would most certainly tell them to pick up a copy of *Daydream Nation*, but in my head I'll always want to say *Experimental Jet Set*.

This bi-month's records: Portishead, *Dummy*; Hugs, *The Tarpit*; Ampere, *All Our Tomorrows End Today*; Snowblood, *The Human Tragedy* (reviewed in this issue); Welcome the Plague Year, *S/T*.

Julius Airwave, The – Dragons Are The New Pink, CD

This is a great CD from start to finish, with really no weak material to speak of. The Julius Airwave play melodic rock with a touch of the experimental, similar to Radiohead. "Pencil Box" is like two songs in one, with its optimistic verses that segue into a different key for the anthemic, Nirvana-like chorus. The verses to "Tickle Me Penguin" could have been a Weezer song before bursting into the melodic chorus where Rick Colado sings, "This is just a song / it doesn't have to mean anything." Rick becomes a country crooner on "Broken Tusk" while something that sounds like a human voice wails in the background. "Catherine" is a love song that sounds like the Beatles with fuzzed out guitars. Finally, "Oh I Love You" ends in a tribal jam that sounds like it should have been an old spiritual. (SJ)
 Sickroom Records, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

June – The June EP, CDEP

This band used to be called Drive Like June, but shortened their name to June out of respect to Mark Trombino and Drive Like Jehu. Featuring lots of rhythm-guitar intros with vocals over them, these five songs are about lost love and other things hard to decipher. Bands don't steal names; they steal sound, music and ideas. They take someone else's sound insert cute boys from a Blink-182 concert and place them on M2. Pop punk sucks—when will this emo nightmare be over? Just wake me when it's safe to come out and dance. Until then I'll be in my bedroom listening to real vinyl records. (DI)
 The Vinyl Summer, 847 Grove Street, Glencoe, IL 60022, www.thevinylsummer.com

Justin Gorman IX:XI – None Of The Above, CD

This CD is Casio keyboard political statement about the November elections. I don't agree with his letting Bush have four more years, and the cheap keyboards and drums and monotone vocals wear thin after awhile. The one highlight is his cover of the Talking Heads' "Once In A Lifetime." (DI)
 IX:XI Productions, PO Box 259661, Madison, WI 53725

Kafafian, Tom – In Through The Outside, CD

Power-pop-tinged rock meets singer/songwriter on this stylistically diverse record. Catchier than The Rocket Summer, more sincere than Dashboard Confessional and wittier than anything you're likely to hear on the radio, *In Through The Outside* might just signal the arrival of a potent new talent. (BN)
 Great Escape Records, www.greatescaperecords.com

Kalister, Rick – The Guitar World Of..., CD

Truly testing the boundaries of what *Punk Planet* will actually review, this 20-track collection of solo guitar is conveniently broken down into three parts. The first two parts are entitled "Christmas Music For Solo Guitar" and

"Blues And Beyond," with the third described as a "space jam band" set simply called "Homeless Gardens." Keep in mind that these aren't ironic titles. Frankly, I'm speechless. Now playing at a Guitar Center near you. (MS)
 Rick Kalister Productions, 8324 Southington Drive, Parma, OH 44129

Kane Hodder – The Pleasure To Remain So Heartless, CD

Oh my god this is freakin' weird. At its base is a growling, screaming hardcore symphony, then comes a melodic emo part and/or a mass of pop hooks and/or some artsy-prog repetitive instrumentation and/or a Darkness-esque falsetto. This conglomeration isn't incredibly pleasing to the ear, but that's what makes it worth checking out. (MG)
 Cowboy Vs. Sailor, PO Box 823, North Hollywood, CA 91603

Karate – Pockets, CD

Karate has been around more than a decade, producing restrained, sparse indie rock teetering on the edge jazz. The musicians are talented, no doubt. Frontman Geoff Farina's nimble guitar work has it impressive moments. But Pockets is forgettable—too low key, too minimal, too quiet—to make much of an impression. (LW)
 Southern Records, www.southern.com

Kegcharge – Sadistic War Glory, CD

Here I was trying to make it through an entire issue without describing anything as "brutal." Let's check the thesaurus...OK, how about: severe, rigorous hardcore from ex- and current World Burns To Death members. Not only is "Thorax Lacerated By Tripwire" a song title, it's also an apt description of the vocals. (JC)
 Hardcore Holocaust, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Kevin Tihista's Red Terror – Wake Up Captain, CD

Best at creating the feeling that beauty burrows into even the scariest situations, Tihista's Red Terror is something to witness, not flee as you would with other kinds and colors of terrors. A judicious use of strings and horns to complement his pleasant guitar strumming gives each of his songs a regality that whips them into lush bouquets of smart pop that go mopey or sunny at the drop of a hat. Wherever the late Elliott Smith is, may he rest in peace knowing that Tihista released a record worlds better than the one he almost had finished at the time of his death, one which should have remained a sacred family secret. (SM)
 Parasol Records, 303 West Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

Khantra – S/T, CD

Intricately layered, riff-driven emo/hardcore with really cool CD packaging. The lyrics are poetic, but not irritatingly personal and esoteric. Mid-tempo melodies and great guitar harmonies show this band has a lot of talent. I would love to see them live. (TK)
 Notrock Music, 6 Rock Hollow Rd, Dover, NJ 07801, www.notrock.com



Kickball - Huckleberryearer, CD

Dreamy pop from this Olympia, Wash., three piece. *Huckleberryearer* is a good record; the lyrics are witty, and the music is tight. The problem is it's so ten years ago. I love *Beat Happening*, but this lo-fi band is trying to play yesterday's music. (DI)
Houseopolis Records, PO Box 7631, Olympia, WA 98507, www.houseopolisrecords.com

Kid Casanova, S/T, CD

Poppy stuff you'd expect from a band with the word "Kid" in its name. Really cute and melodic—I'm a fan. (JG)
BC Records, 45 Lincoln Ave., Tuckahoe, NY 10707, www.bcrecs.com

Kilgore Trout — Novocaine, CDEP

So modern rock, it's hurts. No, it really, really hurts. In line with, like, the Rembrandts or some other made-to-write-TV-sitcom-themes band. (JG)
Self-released, www.kilgoretROUTmusic.com

Kilgour, David - Frozen Orange, CD

Taking cues from both Whiskeytown's small-town blues and Paul Westerberg's big-city boozin' comes *Frozen Orange*, a raspy collection of late-night testimonials and sentimentality. Earnest without being cheesy, Kilgour is a singer-songwriter who can seamlessly take personal anguish and transform it into a fantastically written pop song. (MS)
Mergerecords, P.O. Box 1235 Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Kill The Client - Wage Slave, CD

This metallic grindcore with blast beats and metal guitar riffs all seems the same; the deep, gruff, screamy vocals follow formula without straying one bit. The vocals sound like a rabid dog barking, and all the songs sound the same. (EH)
Counter Intelligence Recordings, www.counterHQ.com

Kill Yourself - Soft Touch Of Man, CDEP

Noisy post-punk band with brains and brawn. These English dudes bash out their jagged riffs with power! Avant-garde but not artsy fartsy. Birth-day Party fans: Take note of this one. (AJ)
Gringorecords, PO Box 7546, Nottingham, NG2 4WT, UK, www.gringorecords.com

Killing The Dream - S/T, CD

Melodic hardcore with plenty of energy displayed through dual vocals and melodic guitar riffs. I highly recommend this to fans of bands like Paint It Black and Lifetime. Here are five songs off of their demo, and five new tracks to raise your fist in the air to. This is a great release. (TK)
Rival Records, PO Box 5242, Concord, CA 94524, www.rivalrecords.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

Spacehog, Resident Alien. Most often, the true love of a band or a particular album is framed by conditions and age, fringed in a faint remembrance that hung around longer than others might have, giving it superiority and its own high-stooled seat in the heart's cockpit. A sickly decade-old this month, this debut record from Spacehog was a record that would have given surging, three-day hard-ons to all of the rock anglers fishing to exuberantly anoint The Strokes, The White Stripes, etc., as the saviors of hallowed rock and roll. The fact is no one was looking for the rebirth of the genre when this record, with one of the all-time greatest singles getting half of its deserved due, was knocked out. I latched onto it immediately: the oddly pronounced and sometimes nonsensical phrasings of Royston Langdon, Jonny Cragg's merciless pounding, Antony Langdon's short and poppy contributions and Richard Steel's doped-out lead guitar. I silk-screened "bootleg" T-shirts for myself and a friend, we got a few other pals to join us, and we passed up one of our high school's Friday night football games to catch them a couple hours away. Their introduction onto the stage—with "Stayin' Alive" blaring and enough fur coats and feather boas to supply a Broadway production—still gives me the chills and reminds me of the last real rock show I saw. And, for the record, I think it's fucking wrong that I should even see this record offered on Amazon for a dime.

Current occupations: Green Day, *American Idiot*; Brian Wilson, *SMiLE*; Interpol, *Antics*; Whirlwind Heat, *Flamingo Honey*; The '89 Cubs, *There Are Giants In The Earth*; Mandarin, *Fast>Future>Present* (reviewed this issue); V/A, *Wicker Park* soundtrack.

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr.) Dana Morse (DM)

Into Another, Ignaurus. I used to jokingly refer to these guys as the Queensryche of hXc before I got into these dudes. Sure it was Richie from Underdog on vocals and that strung-out looking dude from Bold on drums, but I just didn't feel it. There was no hXc here, just poetry sung with spacey metal. Who cares, right? Well, I got dragged to go see them at Babyhead (RIP) in Providence, R.I., and I had a moment of clarity. Maybe I had too much to drink, but I saw something in them I didn't see before. Righteous guitar work, an aggressive rhythm section and singing that matched the music. Sure it was corny sometimes, but even seeing hXc boys and girls hugging each other like at a Journey concert during their semi-ballad "Two Snowflakes," I realized I was hooked. (Side note: "Two Snowflakes" most likely appeared on many a mixtape that sensitive hXc boys made for their lady friends during the '90s if they wanted to get lucky. It was the "Stairway To Heaven" of post-hXc.) This record may not be as rocking as their self-titled LP, but this one is far more diverse and innovative. So before the Darkness got huge, Into Another was the rock band cool enough for scenesters. If you weren't in the know, their fans would snub you if you weren't down. So now you know, weird rock that got you laid. Amen.

What else do I knock the boots to: New records by Interpol, Roots, Talib Kweli, Automato, Panthers and Passage (Anticon).

Knockout Pills, The - 1+1=Ate, CD

Fuck yes. Who isn't a sucker for high energy, hooky, hectic rock 'n' roll? Assholes, that's who. No asshole, this mother's son. Get this or wallow in your room with the lights off because the bulb burned out and you are crippled by emotional inertia. (RR)
Estrus, PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227, www.estrus.com

Kptmichigan - S/T, CDEP

This is psychedelia done through the medium of noise. Other components are melodic in sing-song bass lines and hypnotic guitar strums, accompanied by reassuring folk vocals. Then, the guitars erupt, opening staticky fissures. Rather than distract, the chaos only adds to the psychedelic quality. Most of the album is instrumental, and it contains several field recordings reworked into the mixture. The extremely brief track, "Some People Cry," has a wonderfully upbeat, Velvety feel while it's encased in an electronic buzz. Other pieces, like "evry noW and theN," can be just crackles and low hums with occasional keyboard chords. This spatializes the wide range of the album from the vocal sing-along to the atmospheric bliss of a white-noise womb. On one song, the heavily processed vocals are a real contrast to the rest of the pieces—a drawback, but just a playful tangent in a remarkably interesting work. This is the third album from the German band, and I think I will have to track down the other two. (BA)

Aesthetics, www.aesthetics-usa.com

La Plebe - Conquista 21, CDEP

La Plebe are a Spanish-speaking latino punk band with horns from San Francisco. The music was energetic, but otherwise didn't do too much for me. (SJ)
Self-released, www.laplebe.com

La Plebe - Exploited People, CDEP

Inspired and inspiring, this four-song bilingual EP from San Francisco's La Plebe is an awesome barrage on the senses. They have horns, but they're not a ska-punk band. They sound more like MDC with brass. They tour relentlessly through both CA and Mexico, so watch for them. (AE)
Desarme SF, 2629 Folsom St. #202, San Francisco, CA 94110, www.laplebe.com

Landlord - S/T, CD

There need to be rules for band bios that would disallow them from stating the obvious to thus make critics not feel like jackoffs for thinking the same thing. In this case, Landlord is said to have a thing for The Cure. Well, no shit. While they could never inflict a direct hit to sink Robert Smith's battleship, this New York band boasts a rough similarity. No help needed to figure that one out. (SM)
Self-released, www.landlordmusic.com

Lars Frederiksen And The Bastards - Viking, CD

Taking advantage of his Bastards side project, Rancid's Lars Frederiksen once again unleashes the inner beast. *Viking* is chock-full of old-school-flavored street punk jam-packed with aggression, sneers and jeers. Produced by Rancid bandmate Tim Armstrong, the record has a very raw feel to it, which goes hand in hand with Frederiksen's rebel image, which he puts on display during the opening track as he shouts "Rock & Roll isn't played by nice boys / bastards play street punk rock 'n' roll / we're bad boys." It's an approach that works well on "Bastards," "Skins Punks And Drunks" and "I Percent." Also included are covers of "Marie Marie," "For You" and "Little Rude Girl," a great song that Rancid recorded way back in the day but never officially released. Finally shown the light of day on *Viking*, it is well worth the price of admission alone. (BN)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Lashes, The - The Stupid Stupid, CDEP

The debut EP from this Seattle six-piece is heavy on keyboards and catchy hooks. Riding the new-wave resurgence, The Lashes have created four songs that show their great pop potential. (MP)
Lookout! Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Lee, Ben / Pony Up! - split, 7"

Ben Lee does a cover of "Float On" by Modest Mouse. It's a good song, but is a cover really necessary? Pony Up! Do an original called "I Heard You Got Action," which is a poppy tune about getting some. (SJ)
Dim Mak/Ten Fingers, PO Box 348, Hollywood, CA 90078, www.dimmak.com/tenfingers

Leopold - The Wreck Of Hope, CD

Frantic guitar work with a heavy rhythm section. The lyrics are shot in sporadic bursts that complement the music (i.e., take a back seat to the music). It is reminiscent of Drive Like Jehu in theory, but not nearly as good. I'm left feeling neutral, neither overly excited nor disgusted. (RL)
Total Annihilation, www.totalannihilation.net

Leftover Crack - Fuck World Trade, CD

Leftover Crack play very political crusty hardcore mixed with some ska. It's an unusual combination, but they make it work for them. With production by Steve Albini, *Fuck World Trade* runs the gamut with NY hardcore gang choruses, ripping thrash, bouncy ska and some surprisingly melodic sections. (SJ)
Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Legendary Shack Shakers, Th' - Believe, CD

Over the past year, Col. JD Wilkes and his fellow Shack Shakers have toured the U.S. and Europe numerous times, switched record labels, recorded a

new album and licensed a song for use in a car-insurance commercial. Prior to the recording of *Believe*, badass guitarist Joe Buck (JD's former right-hand man and writing partner) left the band in what, according to Internet rumors, was not the most amicable of splits. Having not seen a LSS concert since his departure, I can't comment on the toll his absence has taken on the group's live act. As far as the new album goes, Buck has been replaced with two competent guitarists, David Lee and Nick Kane. Both play with a more textured feel than Buck, but manage to keep things nice and gritty when necessary. Bassist Mark Robertson stepped up to the plate as producer, and along with drummer Pauly Simonz and numerous guest horn and fiddle players, the band has created an album just as raw as Cockadoodledon't but with a bit more finesse and wider arrangements. They've expanded their blues-punk sound, incorporating elements of Stax-style funk, klezmer and country-waltz ballads. It's a successful title defense by the current champions of boogie. (AJ)
Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Lekman, Jens - When I Said I Wanted To Be Your Dog, CD

Sappy, loungey love songs from a Swedish dude. It's got horns, crooning and tempo that'll lull to you sleep after that shuffleboard game on your senior-citizen cruise. (AA)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, www.secretlycanadian.com

Liars Academy - Demons, CD

I was dreading to listen to this one, but I ended up being pleasantly surprised. I would definitely categorize this as indie music, but I also hear a strong pop sensibility bringing to mind Tom Petty, Elvis Costello and even later Jawbreaker. They do mix in some corny drum-machine breakdowns, but they don't take away from the feeling. The vocals fit nicely: not too whiny, but not monotone and droning. They really have left a great impression on me. I think that in the mid-'90s this would have gone over a lot better. It may be a radio-ready, but even so, this is an impressive and solid release. (TK)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 38202, Albany, NY 12203-8202, www.equalvision.com

Lickgoldensky - S/T, CD

The press sheet that accompanied this record informed me in not-so-subtle terms that the members of Lickgoldensky will do whatever they want when it comes to their music. I guess that means they sat down and decided to make a steaming pile of an album. Let's take a look: Maybe they'll play 20 minutes of feedback while eating potato chips onstage, or maybe they'll lose a singer on tour and play "extended instrumental freak-outs" instead of their real songs. This sounds like the work of a bunch of guys who don't know when to quit. I guess this self-titled album is just another hint gone unnoticed. Could they have really heard

the finished product of weird noise interludes and prog-rock posturing over run-of-the-mill hardcore and been pleased with themselves? Some bands just aren't meant to try something new, and this is one of them. If I wanted to listen to shit, I'd stick my head in the toilet. Flush. (DH)
Level Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Lock And Key - Pull Up The Floorboards, CD

Another band breathing new life into the post-hardcore sound championed by Hot Water Music, Fuel and Fugazi. The rough vocals give them a raw edge, but the music is textured and atmospheric without seeming complicated or indulgent. The best thing Deep Elm has put out in a while. (NS)

Deep Elm, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deeplm.com

Logh - The Raging Sun, CD

As *The Raging Sun* opens, Logh immediately comes off as Sweden's answer to Radiohead and Coldplay. With gracefully cinematic arrangements, downer vocals and the odd musical left turn, Logh walks the line between elegance and experimentation—a guitar twitch in one song is balanced with a graceful keyboard melody in another. "The Bones Of Generations," however, proves this is indeed a band to be reckoned with. "You got a badge, but I got a death wish," shouts Mattias Friberg in a panicked shrill, and thus is born an explosive protest song. (TM)
Bad Taste Records, Box 1243, 221 05 Lund, Sweden, www.badtasterecords.se

Love Equals Death - 4 Notes On A Dying Scale, CD

Energetic old-school punk full of sing-along choruses, rapid-fire melodies and "fist in the air" breakdowns. There are no intricate guitar solos, long instrumental interludes or cutesy keyboards. Just in-your-face old school punk rock—and that's just fine with me. (BN)
Pop Smeat, #970, 2629 Chestnut St., San Francisco, CA 94123, www.popsmeatrecords.com

Love Songs - All Branches No Trunk, CD

Love Songs remind me of the slop-core bands from the old Secret Center label, including today's best-known sloppy band, The Bananas. They're keeping pop slop alive, and while this isn't the best example of the genre, it's fun nonetheless. Definitely good for what they are—give Love Songs a listen. (AE)

New Disorder Records, 115 Bartlett St., San Francisco, CA 94110, www.newdisorder.com; 625 Thrashcore, www.625thrash.com

Low Skies - I Have Been To Beautiful Places, CDEP

Low Skies drone-rock emits a feeling of heaviness. *I Have Been To Beautiful Places* combines solemn drumbeats and bare electric guitars to create a mood behind the vocals, rather than a single, united song. This weighty melancholia runs throughout the EP, but it's not so depressing as to overshadow the entire disc. On "Pull It Over," ominous organ keys

are tantamount to strained vocals; however, they are abandoned for a more hopeful, upbeat guitar hook. Likewise, Low Skies bring together elements diplomatically to put them at odds again. There are parts of concrete melodies, but they play second fiddle to the understated vocals, standing at the forefront with a strange, controlled sadness. (AJA)
Flameshovel, 1658 N. Milwaukee, #276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Ludicra - Another Great Love Song, CD

Here's proof that you don't have to be from some Nordic country, burning down churches and cutting off heads to play some really incredible black metal. Ludicra formed in the Bay Area, with John Cobbett (Hammers Of Misfortune) and Aesop (Hickey). The vocals from Chrissy Cather and Laurie Sue Shanaman create an eerie, unsettling feeling. Not only is the music some of the best melodic metal I have ever heard, but the booklet has the lyrics to their songs displayed on various prescriptions, a cake and a message in a bottle. This is Alternative Tentacle's first black-metal band and a damn fine start. This is a record that should not be overlooked. (TK)

AT, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092, www.alternativetentacles.com

Lusine - Serial Hodgepodge, CD

This electronic set of beats gets blippy and scratchy and has a lot of trinkets that tickle the ears. The album is at its prime with the more ambient tracks that engage abstractly with IDM, though its house pieces can't make me dance (though what can?). (BA)

Ghostly International, 416 E. Huron #1B, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, www.ghostly.com

Macromantics - Hyperbolic Logic, CDEP

Shit, I guess hip-hop really is a worldwide thing. Here's a young lady from Australia (!) who displays an impeccable sense of cadence and word play. Macromantics (a.k.a. Romy Hoffman) is a true poet and musician using her adopted genre to express her social observations and internal struggles. Unlike many Caucasian MC's from the U.S., Hoffman doesn't attempt to affect a "street" accent or anything. Rather, she uses her natural voice to flow over gloomy, RZA-inspired beats. The overall impact is similar to what The Slits did with reggae music on *Cuts*. I've become disillusioned with hip-hop in the past few years, due to the rampant, soul-sucking "bling-bling" virus that's spread out of control. This is the type of disc that makes me wanna rethink my "don't listen to any rap made after 1996" rule. A few more releases as good as this one, and Macromantics will have restored my faith in the boom-bap. (AJ)

Self-released, info@pennydrop.com.au

Mandarin - Fast>Future>Present, CD

Melody-driven indie rock with some mathy elements, this record is glossy, pretty and moody. But it lacks energy and suffers from predictability, despite being well arranged. The lengthy songs have a tendency

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss (BM)

Archers Of Loaf, Vs. *Greatest Of All Time*. In 1994, upon releasing the blistering EP follow up to their debut full-length, Chapel Hill's Archers Of Loaf gloriously tarnished the all-too-pretty face of indie rock. Their unmistakable sound has since become a milestone for second and third generation audiences and bands. Intentionally or accidentally, Vs. *Greatest Of All Time* serves as a cancerous, punk-influenced assault on the bland realm of early '90s melodramatic alternative pop. Both reckless and addictive, the tug-of-war guitars, choppy dynamics and dual gravel vocals drag listeners to the edge of a cliff, pulling back at the very last moment. Lyrically, the EP is conceptually based, obviously and cryptically stabbing at the music industry's countless flaws, primarily that of financially driven infatuation with subculture trends. From the fist pumping chorus of "Audiowhere," to the chaotic sing-alongs of "Lowest Part Is Free" (one of my absolute favorite songs), to the more subdued lo-fi tendencies of "Freezing Point," all five tracks (aided in production value by guru Bob Weston) are unique standouts. In seam-splitting seizures of complexly overdriven pop, Vs. *Greatest Of All Time* captures the band at their heaviest moment, cataloging some of their most impressive work. The ardor and elusive aggression that the Archers Of Loaf were able to consistently convey has come under the scrutiny of many aspiring suitors, but in the case of such rare and unique talent, imitation and analysis falter in the path of simple adoration.

Music to marinate to: Willie Nelson, *The Song In Your Mind*; Colossal, *Welcome The Problems*; Cat Power, *Moon Pix*; Juno, *A Future Lived In Past Tense*; Steven Malkmus, *S/T*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

The Bouncing Souls, *Maniacal Laughter*. It is hard to believe that almost ten years have passed since the Bouncing Souls released their second LP. It is great to look at the band now, seeing how far they have come, the popularity they have garnered and the lasting impression they have made on the scene. What is even better is to trace it all directly back to a little gem of a record titled *Maniacal Laughter*. The easy way to explain the record's significance would be to name all of the crowd favorites that made up the track listing: "Lamar Vannoy," "The Freaks, Nerds And Romantics," "Quick Check Girl," "Here We Go," "Born To Lose" and "The Ballad of Johnny X" are still the staple of a live set. But talking about this record without mentioning the raw, stripped sound would be missing half the point. There's something to be said for the slight distortions that give the sound the slightly crude touch so many great punk albums are known for. Add to that the coarse guitars and complete disregard for the typical melody, bridge, arrangement and breakdown, and you're getting close to what makes this record so fucking irresistible. It's just a great punk-rock record, and given ten more years time *Maniacal Laughter* will be lovingly referred to as a classic.

Bands to keep an eye on: Shot Baker, Burning Bright, The Invisibles, Crime In Stereo, New Blood Revival.



to drag without holding your interest. Mediocre (EH)
54° 40' or Fight!, PO Box 10601, Acme, MI 49610, www.fiftyfourfortyflight.com

Maplewood – S/T, CD

I know that film director Wes Anderson won't hire anyone other than Mark Mothersbaugh to write his soundtracks, but you can almost picture Max Fisher flying a kite to the backdrop of Maplewood tunes. They're light and crafty and live just enough in the past to work the mind's old Polaroids. (SM)
Self-released, www.maplewoodfeelsgood.com

Matchbook Romance / Motion City Soundtrack – split, CD

Two highly energetic acts get together, strip down their sound to acoustic basics and proceed to create a split that goes against everything their prior releases established. In the end the record lacks the enthusiasm and the vigor these bands have come to be known for. For collectors only. (BN)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Memphis – I Dreamed We Fell Apart, CD

Considering Torquil Campbell and Chris Dumont met in a French hospital to tame sleeping-pill addiction, their music makes sense. It's ultimately reminiscent of the moments, upon waking, where the dream meets reality like a cold-water shower, and the fog from the time lived in sleep crashes into true life. That overlapping of worlds, where the alarm clocks' bleating blends into a fire engine's siren from a dream, is the essence of what Memphis do on their debut. Its lazy layers of lofted pop slip behind programmed drums, falling rains and a lyrical proficiency that defies the cognitive state the two seem to be writing from. (SM)
Paper Bag Records, www.paperbagrecords.com

Menomena – I Am The Fun Blame Monster, CD

The title of the album is an anagram of "the first Menomena album." You find that out by viewing the hand-assembled flip-book that makes for some nice packaging for their CD; it's as unique as their approach to the music. Based in Portland, Ore., this band uses improvisation combined with a loop-based computer program, Deeler, which was written by one of the members, Brent Knopf. The songs are clean and often have quirky pop melodies that play out through various stages of experimental variations and additions. Just when you think you get the pattern of the song, they shake it up a bit, which keeps it refreshing without being disjointing. (BA)
Filmguerrero, PO Box 14414, Portland, OR 97293, www.filmguerrero.com

Mercs – Songs In The Key Of Fun, 7"

Forgetting the title, Merchs play metal-influenced hardcore with simplistically hopeful lyrics that can be pretty sappy. The music itself is kind of boring and uninventive and really, not all that fun. (AJA)
Square of Opposition Records, 2935 Fairview St., Bethlehem, PA 18020

Reviewer Spotlight: Missy Paul (MP)

Oasis, (What's The Story) Morning Glory? Recently a British magazine named this as the most important British album of all time. The statement's bold, but it's also the truth. Released in 1995 amidst fierce competition from Blur, the album not only proved that *Definitely Maybe* wasn't a fluke, but it crowned Oasis as the kings of Britpop (as well as British culture), helping to usher in New Labour and laddism. Taking the Beatles' pop sensibilities, the Stones swagger and the Kinks sibling rivalry, the Gallaghers borrowed and admittedly stole from their forefathers until they had something so familiar, yet unique. We heard the bouncy, jangle rock of "Hello," "She's Electric" and "Roll With It," but not like this. Opposite to American bands of the time, who eagerly confessed their inferiority to other bands, Oasis shouted about being the best band in the world. It wasn't cockiness, but genuine confidence. They believed, so we believed it too. It helped that *Morning Glory* contains some of the best rock songs ever. "Don't Look Back In Anger," with the tender piano, swelling guitars and amazing drum fills is easily one of the best power ballads in existence. So completely snotty, but also completely catchy, "Morning Glory" is the type of song bands die trying to write. Each song on the album is effortless rock perfection without a single misstep. Even the two instrumentals illustrate the skill and musical maturity of Noel. This album still sounds great, and any serious rock fan should own it.

Until I get new Oasis, I'm spinning: The Libertines, S/T; Tegan & Sara, *So Jealous*; Rilo Kiley, *More Adventurous*; Dizzee Rascal, *Showtime*; Marc Bolan & T.Rex, *20th Century Boy Ultimate Collection*

Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

Big Black, Atomizer. This is what hardcore should have morphed into instead of a dogmatic abortion. Roland positively pummels, the guitars grate like nothing before or after, and the vocals positively drip anger, cynicism and loathing (self- and otherwise). From the opening feedback hum of "Jordan, Minnesota," *Atomizer* throbs with negative energy and doesn't relent until the live version of "Cables" (Big Black's best song prior to this record wisely included here). Analog elitism aside, you have to own this on vinyl; partly for the correct flow of the record and partly because it doesn't exist on CD. Sure, *The Rich Man's Eight Track Tape* collects nine of the 10 tracks in sequence—clunker "Strange Things" being the sole emission—but that lessens the self-contained near-perfection of *Atomizer*. (The band themselves stuck a warning label on the Headache EP reading "Not as good as Atomizer, so don't get your hopes up, cheese.") *Songs About Fucking* is great, but don't believe the hype. *Atomizer* is the best thing Big Black ever recorded.

Five balls of goodness: Tom Waits, *Real Gone*; Brian Wilson, *Smile*; Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, *Abattoir Blues / The Lyre Of Orpheus*; Hot Snakes, *Audit In Progress*; Melvins + Lustmord, *Pigs Of The Roman Empire*.

Migala – La Incredible Adventura, CD

Here are ambient sound and cinemascapes from Spain by a band that put out two CDs on Sub Pop. The music is an accompaniment to a first-class DVD of Spanish and American road trips. The sounds are an updated electronic version of the Spaghetti Westerns that made Clint Eastwood famous. (DI)
Acuarela, PO Box 18136, 28080 Madrid, Spain, www.acuareladiscos.com

Mika Miko – S/T, 7"

Artsy punk with a touch of riot grrl. These songs would fit perfectly on one of the *Rodney On The Roq* comps, and I'm digging them. The sleeve looks really nice, with two color screen printing. Definitely a band to look out for in the future. (DA)
PPM, PO Box 291301, Los Angeles, CA 90029 www.thesnell.org/ppm

Mike Blaxx And The SDABS – Starting Them Off Young, CD

These fat old men (featuring members of the "legendary" band Blanks 77) do nothing but mimic a style that became redundant 25 years ago. Leave the pick slides to Jones and Thunders, the misogyny at the door, and while your at it, get a buzz, cock (no pun intended). (RL)
SOS Records, PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92708-3017, www.sosrecords.us

Minor Times, The – Making Enemies, CD

At one time I thought I liked Level-Plane Records, but I'm not sure why. They must have put out something that I liked for a little while, but I've heard way too many fashion-core bands coming from Level-Plane. The Minor Times doesn't have that chic "I'm so hip" sound. I can only characterize their sound as nü hardcore. The vocals strive for that brutal sound that's popular these days. I can't recommend this to anyone; there isn't anything particularly bad about this album, it's just an overplayed genre, and this band doesn't stand out from the pack. (DA)
Level Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Misery / Toxic Narcotic – split, CD

Both of these bands are pretty popular, but I haven't heard either until now. Misery reminds me of Discharge a little bit. Toxic Narcotic is faster, with a similar sound. Features always great art by Mike Bukowski. If you are a fan of these bands, I bet you already have this. (DA)
Go Kart, PO Box 20, Prince Street Station, New Your, NY 10012 www.gokartrecords.com

Missouri Compromise, The – Creation Of Maine, CD

Although their name may suggest otherwise, Chicago's The Missouri Compromise don't play educational Schoolhouse Rock-type songs. Mostly, they play fuzzy, post-punk drawn—sometimes a little too closely—from Pavement and early Modest Mouse. There are no stand-out moments on this album, but the band's solid musicianship hints they are capable of growth. (LW)
Roydale Recording Company, www.roydale.com

Monster Movie – To The Moon, CD

Despite the name, this is no Monster Mash rehash. Monster Movie are a duo featuring Christian Savill (of Slowdive fame) and Sean Hewson. The music here is definitely in the same vein as Slowdive, with dreamy melodies and vocals sung softly in a very English way, mixed with a little electro-dance similar to the Pet Shop Boys. Everything here is understated to the point where you can miss just how good the music is. They mostly keep a mellow tone throughout, but they crank it up a notch on "I950DA." I'm glad to see these blokes are still making fine music. Cheers! (SJ)
Clairecords, 1812 J St #1, Sacramento, CA 95814, www.clairecords.com

Monty Love – Girls Are The New Boys, CD

It's cool to see guys singing about breaking down gender barriers, as most guys are more worried about getting girls than anything else. The singer's voice reminds me of Trevor Keith from Face To Face. Musically they don't fall into a specific genre; it's just midpaced, poppy punk—basic but fun. (DA)
Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215 www.immigrantsun.com

Moore, Ian – Luminaria, CD

Why do some guys love to make this sort of weepy, self-indulgent, singer/songwriter crap? Is it to pull chicks? Seriously, I wanna know. Oh! Maybe it's to pull dudes. OK, now it all makes sense. Uh, well, um...more power to ya, bro. (AJ)
Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Moore Brothers, The – Now Is The Time For Love, CD

Singer/songwriter brothers Thom and Greg Moore are part of the new class of psychedelic folkies who have crept into some of even the least-hippified indie rockers album collections. Their formula is simple: strong vocal harmonies and fantastical lyrics layered over the strumming of a single acoustic guitar. What makes these siblings stand out from the rest are the nonsensical, almost-childlike stories they tell about Schwinn bicycles, love, heartbreak, Motorhead and dogs. This quirky and beautiful music is easy to appreciate. (LW)
Plain Recordings, PO Box 2947, San Francisco, CA 94126, www.plainrecordings.com

Morthern Vlade Art – Slow Wave Sleep, CD

My knowledge of new-wave synth-pop is fairly limited, but I definitely hear a Depeche Mode influence here. These guys are from Paris and are trying to rehash the '80s. It's not something I really get into, but there are loads of hipsters in Portland that would eat this up. (TK)
Luminal Records, 123 Luckie St. #1304, Atlanta, GA 30303, www.luminalrecords.com

Mortimur – S/T, CD

This is some GSYBE or Don Cab type shit. These Columbus, Ohio, boys have taken a lesson or two from the mid-'90s Chicago math-rock scene and fused complex guitar work with dark, brooding melodies. (JG)
We Want Action, 1510 Runaway Bay Dr., 2B, Columbus, OH 43204, www.wewantaction.com

Mortis – The Grudge, CD

Mortis should spend less time dressing up like an elf and more time making music that's not Q-grade industrial bullshit. (DH)
Earache, 43 W. 38th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

Moviehouse Arcade, The – The Poly Sci EP, CDEP

Relying on their musical instincts, this trio plays darker leaning pop/emo. Not sappy, it's more danceable than anything else. They ice the cake with the Stones' cover of "Miss You" before nose-diving with a crappy 11-minute dance/IDM epic. I give it a B. (DM)
The New Beat Records, 3100 Sevier Ave., Knoxville, TN 37920, www.thenewbeat.net

Muffs, The – Really Really Happy, CD

After five years since their last release, The Muffs are back with Kim Shattuck's distinctive vocals and pop sensibilities still in effect. At this point you pretty much know what to expect from The Muffs: consistently good, hard-edged pop music with straight-forward lyrics and giant hooks. (JC)
Five Foot Two, PO Box 404, Redondo Beach, CA 90277, www.fivefoottworecords.com

Naked Puritans, The – Don't Burn Your House Down, CDEP

Three hardy power-pop songs—if they were sandwiches, I'd eat them. The midtempo "Tokyo Rose" is a more straightforward, energetic pop song than the punk-derived "Don't Burn Your House Down" and the live-recorded "Punk Daddy." (AJA)
Self-released, www.nakedpuritans.com

Necrophagist – Epitaph, CD

I was first turned on to this band (then just one man and a drum machine) by an acquaintance that was mad into crazy guitar work. The debut CD *Onset Of Putrefaction* was a whirlwind of riffing beyond comprehension, coupled with some seriously good drum-machine programming. I still can't get over it, and now mastermind Muhammed Suicmez has returned with a full live band and a record that sounds like it may have well been recorded with a drum machine. There's no guessing what's coming next on this record, and while some have slagged the traditional, guttural vocals (based on the fact that the music is so advanced in a somewhat stagnant genre), I find them to be perfect. Although there's the classical style riffing, it's still grounded in the basics of death metal. This record and *Decapitated's The Negation* are officially the only two death-metal records worth their weight this year, in my opinion. Necrophagist deserves to be at the top of the heap, and Epitaph should more than do the trick. Go buy this now! (DH)
Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

Jimmy Eat World / Blueprint, split 7". I'm still disoriented by Jimmy Eat World's massive success. Don't get me wrong—I understand why they're so huge—but it's still weird to hear a band I've known for so long get played at stadiums during games and on the radio. Back in 1995, though, they were just another emo band along with Mineral, Christie Front Drive and, in this case, Houston's Blueprint. I talked about Blueprint's full-length a couple of issues back, and the track they did for this 7", "In-between Angels," shows the band at its peak: a nuanced, interesting song that employed both restraint (check the somewhat lengthy intro) and power (the amazing ending). These were guys who played their instruments well, and "In-between Angels" was the grand finale before Blueprint began sliding down the slippery slope of indie rock. Jimmy Eat World's stellar track(s), "Christmas Card"/"Untitled" bear little resemblance to the multiplatinum band who wrote "The Middle." Jim Atkins' strained vocals are often yelled, but during the singing parts you'll recognize his voice. "Christmas Card" is a dynamic song with amazing start/stop guitars and alternating moods: the subdued bridges versus the rougher verses (no chorus to speak of). "Christmas Card" eventually blends into subdued coda "Untitled." Jimmy Eat World's song(s) were eventually released on their B-sides compilation in 2000, and "Christmas Card" is still my favorite Jimmy Eat World track. They mastered the mid- to late-'90s emo sound and toiled for years before hitting it big. Good for them—those guys worked their asses off. But I'll take this 7" over "The Middle" any day of the week.

Caption reads "How does he do it?": Converge, *You Fail Me* (reviewed this issue); Straylight Run, *S/T* (reviewed this issue); Jerry Lee Lewis, *Live At The Star Club*; The Dismemberment Plan, *Emergency & I*; Neko Case, *The Tigers Have Spoken* (reviewed this issue).

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

Token Entry, Jaybird. The other day I noticed that new copies of Circle Jerks CDs have a sticker that reads "As featured on a Vans commercial." A little disconcerting, but maybe just a sign of the times. When I was a still a lad, I discovered a band called Token Entry because of a sticker on their album that said, "Produced by Dr. Know from Bad Brains." I was probably buying into a slightly more selective marketing ploy, but that album, *Jaybird*, proved to be awesome. Spawned from the same scene that ushered in the generic youth crew sound, Token Entry were a lot more fun and rocked a lot harder. And honestly, in the '80s, I couldn't resist any band that sang about skating. "All that I want to do is skate, skate" (from the song "Jaybird") pretty much summed up a good chunk of my life. The anti-porno song on this album, however, didn't speak to me as much. But their similarities to another fave, Suicidal Tendencies, did. Both had that skate-rock aspect of fast songs with a hard-rock basis, including lots of wailing solos. And Tim's vocals were sung rather than growled or yelled. I'd say that the first two Token Entry albums are still my favorite among NYHC, and whenever I visit New York and see the token entry sign by the subway, I still sing "Token Entry, GO!" out loud or in my head. Then I head-walk over the subway crowd like at the end of *Crocodile Dundee*.

You all handle my ass pennies: Monsula, *Sanitized CD*; MDC, *Smoke Signals*; China Drum – All, *Quicksand – Demos/B-Sides*; Void/Faith split, *Gray Matter, Food For Thought CD*; Soulside, *Hot Body Gram*; The Observers, *So What's Left Now*; Hot Snakes, *live*.

Nedelle And Thom – Summerland, CD

Caramelized with detail and care, *Summerland* is a sweetly sophisticated album that most, if not every, pop enthusiast should find irresistible. Lush with female/male harmony, witty romantics and syrupy melody, Nedelle And Thom fondly look back to the cabaret greats of the 1960s while incorporating modernized indie-jazz elements. Highly recommended. (BM)
Kill Rock Stars, 120 N.E. State St., #418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Nevea Tears – Do I Have To Tell You Why I Love You, CD

It's a good idea to try to spice up your typical metal/hardcore band. Just don't spice it up with large sweeps of radio-friendly emo whine and keyboard-laden synth parts. Mixing three popular-yet-shitty "underground" sounds is just taking a step backward, really. (MG)
Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Nevski – S/T, CD

Nevski was formed by two members of the Chilean hardcore band Redencion, but then their new band heads into new territory, a more art-rock sound that certainly gets hard, though is just as comfortable at a slower pace as well. On some pieces, they channel the alternate universe of the Banshees or The Cure, which is most noticeable in the spacey quality of the guitar, much as several bands now reference that decade in revamped style. Here, the smoky vocals of Soledad stand out and give the band their most original essence—making it sound as if Mazzy Star decided to turn it up a couple notches and toy with their pedals. She sings mostly in Spanish, though some songs are in English. Overall, this band seems as though their sound could have come from New York as much as Santiago. (BA)
Discoparlante, C/O Joao Da Silva, Casilla 120 - Correo 12, La Reina, Santiago, Chile, www.discoparlante.com

Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds, Abattoir Blues / The Lyre Of Orpheus, CD

Two CDs of Nick Cave at his fiery best. *Abattoir Blues* finds the often disconsolate pianist on a gospel-infused detour. The subdued "Messiah Ward" takes a late-night rhythm and blues stroll, while "Hiding All Away" builds to a church-choir finale in which Cave sounds as if he's fighting off the apocalypse. Then on "There She Goes, My Beautiful World," Cave celebrates the chaos with a dancing-in-the-aisles exuberance. Second disc, *The Lyre Of Orpheus*, opens up a bit, running the gamut from the pretty acoustic ditty that is "Breathless" to the title track, which turns the Greek gods into a twisted fairy tale. (TM)
Anti, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026 www.anti.com

No Doctors – Erp Saints, CDEP

I really enjoyed their previous record, *Hunting Season*, and they improve their sound on this three-song EP. The music is like Jon Spencer's garage band still with an amazing alto saxophone. The vocals are good, but they left me wanting more than three songs. (DI)
No Sides Records, P.O. Box 257491, Chicago, IL 60625, www.nosides.net

NoMovingParts – This Will All End Badly, CD

Drowsy instrumental rock that hits way too many valleys, while skipping out on all of the peaks. Avoid listening if operating heavy machinery. (MS)
(This is) World of Noise / self-released, www.nmvpgts.com

Noodle Muffin – Regime Change, CD

Very Negativland, Noodle Muffin uses a lot of reworked samples of Bush with electronic drums and sonic manipulation to amazing satirical effect. It's damning, it's entertaining, it's damned entertaining. (RR)
Noodle Muffin, PO Box 25697, Los Angeles, CA 90025, www.noodlemuffin.com

North Elementary – Lose Your Favorite Things, CD

With earthy guitar soloing suggestive of Doug Martsch, marked vocals by Margaret White and a melee of instruments, *Lose Your Favorite Things* held my interest from start to finish. Overall, it's a solid indie-rock album combining polished orchestrations with uncouth guitar melodies and drum rhythms. (AJA)
Sit-N-Spin Records, 118 Estes Dr., Carrboro, NC 27510, www.sit-n-spinrecords.com

O.A.O.T's, The – Typical, CD

It's funny that The One And Only Typicals are supposedly known in L.A. for their riveting live shows because they sound typical enough to blend into Bozeman, Mont., much less the second largest city in the U.S. There's nothing wrong with being ordinary, exactly what their bubble-gummy pop is. (SM)
Self-released, www.theooots.com

Obscene, The – I Was A Teenage Antichrist, CDEP

These guys rule! Playing early Queens punk rock with blatantly offensive lyrics: "Judy Smells Like Vaseline" speaks of how "Judy likes it up the butt" and "Skullfucker" includes the lyrics "I wanna stick my cock inside your pretty face / I wanna fuck you for no goddamn reason." I can't stop laughing, and the music is so catchy that I'm afraid I am going to end up singing along in my sleep the next time I have a girl over and get my ass kicked. I'm really looking forward to their upcoming full-length, *RocknRoll Asshole*. Definitely worth checking out. (TK)
Bony Orbit Records, www.bonyorbitrecords.com

**Occam's Razor / They Found My Naked Corpse Face Down In The Snow – split, 7"**

This is straight-up screaming emo back before it was a forbidden word and the good stuff was coming out of San Diego—back when noisy nihilism overruled calculated posturing. Call it a throwback to early Antioch Arrow and Angel Hair days, but it's better than the genre's current state. (VC)
GSR, www.gsrmusic.com

Ocean Blue, The – Waterworks, CDEP

This is the first release in three years for The Ocean Blue, a band that apparently reached some degree of popularity in the late '80s/early '90s. Their concise pop-rock with easygoing melodies and catchy, jangly guitars is more upbeat than their late-'80s Britpop contemporaries. As well, the album is exceptionally pulled together and concise (in a nontotalitarian way, of course). (AJA)
Self-released, www.theoceanblue.com

Octet – Cash And Carry Songs, CD

These guys have a very intense image thing going on: Their visages stare out at you from the CD like some creepy, *Matrix*-y villains. Musically, their sound is kinda electronic-baroque. There's definitely some harpsichord-type sounds in there. For Francophiles, or fans of blippy-bloppy minimalism, or the extremely restrained. (JG)
Plain Recordings, PO Box 2947, San Francisco, CA 94126, plain@buyrun.com

Odd Project – The Second Hand Stopped, CD

What we have here is a blend of metal and emo with some full-on finger-shredding guitar solos. The press release makes this album seem like it's the most innovative thing to ever come out, but isn't everyone playing this kind of music nowadays? (SJ)
Indianola Records, 815 Gornito Rd, Valdosta, GA 31602, www.indianolarecords.com

Oddzar – S/T, CD

Saturated with enough beefy bass and the low-end riffage to rust out a pick-up truck's undercarriage, Oddzar howls moonward and tries to imitate its ideals to the best of its abilities. Although they fall short, this Maryland foursome gets a blue ribbon for Russ Eckell's great voice. (SM)
DCide, www.dcide.com

Oktober Skyline – That's How Tripods Work, CD

These guys have an awesome website. I recommend everyone check it out, even if their brand of "experimental grind" sounds a lot like Dillinger Escape Plan, and their lyrics read like the incoherent ramblings of the schizophrenic bum you pass every time you walk downtown. (TK)
Doppelganger Records, 803 Saint John St., Allentown, PA 18103, www.doppelganger-records.com

Olney, Grant – Brokedown Gospel, CD

Adult contemporary jazz on Asian Man Records? I thought they were the label that found comfort in ridiculous ska punk and un-self-deprecating singer-songwriters? After about 30 seconds, it became apparent that Mr. Olney has a huge appreciation for Jeff Buckley's *Grace* and has done his very best to recreate this masterpiece. All joking aside, "Red Wine," "Sweet Wine"—it's a bit obvious here, pal. A cute effort, but at this stage of the game, Mr. Olney seems a bit underdeveloped to be working with such delusions of grandeur. (MS)
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585 Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Matt Siblo (MS)

Propagandhi, Less Talk, More Rock. It's not very often that one record has the ability to impact the way you look at the world, but when *Less Talk, More Rock* was released during the end of my seventh grade year, it came as something of a shock to much of what I had previously believed. Radical feminists? Anti-fascist tirades and democratic rhetoric from Noam Chomsky? I couldn't understand how suddenly such topics had become intertwined with the music I was listening to. I quickly found myself attached to these new-found ideologies, including an ill-fated flirtation with vegetarianism partly due to the lyrical content of "Nailing Descartes To The Wall/Liquid Meat Is Still Murder." Unlike most other political punk bands I had previously heard, Propagandhi had a knack for making their points interesting, sarcastic and, most importantly, extremely catchy. While this record was only released a scant eight years ago, the world has endured massive changes since then. During the late '90s, before every forgettable pop-punk band had an anti-war pin proudly displayed on their blazer, Propagandhi had enough guts to point out the injustice in society while the rest of the punk community lapped up the luxury and ignorance of Clinton's golden age. Considering our current post-9/11 landscape, *Less Talk, More Rock's* ultimate message rings even truer now than it did in 1996: Even "privileged fucks like me / should feel obliged to whine and kick and scream / until everyone has everything they need."

Five great reasons to sit in a room by yourself: Green Day, *American Idiot*; Lucero, *That Much Further West*; Against Me!, *As The Eternal Cowboy*; Ted Leo And The Pharmacists, *Shake The Sheets*; Travis Morrison, *Travistan*.

Orphan Project, The – Am I Here To Shoot Balls Or To Clear the Table?, CD

These guys have a workable power pop/emo sound, but leaves something to be desired. The singer has too much of the whininess that plagues the genre, and I wish the band would increase the tempo a bit. I've heard worse "emo" bands, but I'm not compelled to play this again. (JJG)
Self-released, www.theorphanproject.com

Orphans, The – Raise The Youth, CD

Twenty-one blazing tracks in the spirit of '77 UK punk dealing with political and social issues facing us. There's a bite in the guitars, a sneer in the vocals and anger in the writing. What it all boils down to is that you should hunt down this record right now. (BN)
Fistolo Records, PO Box 2836, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.fistolo.com

oRSo – My Dreams Are Back And They Are Better Than Ever, CD

oRSo play major key, sentimental melancholia. The lineup is tenor banjo, violin, alto sax and upright bass, and about half the songs have vocals. These songs are filled with melancholy longing somewhat like a Tom Waits sans the barroom personality, while the violin and sax float around on top in a way that is reminiscent of The Dirty Three. The instrumental tunes are really more like chamber compositions than would fit right in on an ECM record. The conflict between the vocal and vocal-less tracks is balanced by the emotional longing present throughout the CD. This album would make for good late-night music alone or spending romantic evenings with a significant other. (SJ)
Perishable Records, PO Box 57-8804, Chicago, IL 60657-8804, www.perishablerecords.com

Ostinato – Left Too Far Behind, CD

Left Too Far Behind is a sterling example of a record that I appreciated the effort, but didn't actually enjoy. Taking cues from the artistic drones of Unwound, Lungfish and Mogwai, Ostinato have all of the necessary ingredients; it's just not enough to keep me interested. (MS)
Exile on Mainstream Records, Bruno-Bauer-St. 16 12051 Berlin, Germany, www.mainstreamrecords.de

Otesanek – S/T, CDEP

The slow and painful death of Otesanek. That seems to be what this is a recording of and, yet, their sparse, experimental hardcore completely mesmerizes you with its syncopated, growling lead vocals and guitar that disengage when shit gets too heavy, leaving you in white-noise shadows. (CC)
The Electric Human Project, 500 South Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805, www.electrichumanproject.com

Other Lebowski, The – S/T, CD

In the '90s, this would be called "alternative rock." There are vocals that remind me of bands like Pearl Jam and shifts in the songs between soft to hard and rockin'. Unfortunately, this band doesn't rock enough to make up for the slow parts that left me checking my watch. (JJG)
Self-released, lebowski@jager.com

Outbreak – You Make Us Sick, CD

Incredibly fast, old-school-style hardcore punk. That's really all it is. Get ready for the crew vox and finger-pointing mosh antics, kiddies! (MG)
Bridge Nine, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199, www.bridge9.com

Paper Chase, The / Red Worms' Farm – split, CD

This inaugural release from Robotradio Records finds U.S. rockers The Paper Chase alternating songs with Italian band Red Worms' Farm. Both

bands shine as they usher in an new art movement by this Italian label. Apparently, the label wants to combine visual and audio art forms. Red Worms' Farm kick things off with their noise-pop gem "Jelly Bean." They spend the rest of the release experimenting with abrasive post-punk. The Paper Chase do a fine job with their harsh indie rock, especially on "Isn't She Something?," which is reminiscent of Les Savy Fav. If the five tracks weren't enough, there are also two remixes and two videos and cover art by Italian cartoonist Alessandro Baroncini. This is a fine start for the new movement, and I anticipate further releases. (MP)
Robotradio Records, PO Box 62, 38015 Lavis (TN) Italy, www.robotradiorecords.com

Parker, Anders – Tell It To The Dust, CD

With the recent success of acts such as Bright Eyes and Dashboard Confessional, a wave of singer/songwriter acts has flooded the indie scene. Most of their contributions can be disregarded almost instantly—a crop of insipid recordings released in hope of cashing a quick buck. Anders Parker is an exception to that rule, as *Tell It To The Dust* so vividly illustrates. This latest collection of songs is a brazen look at a barren Americana landscape with touches of folk, rock, indie, country and pop. As such, it is a touching collection of songs inspired by the likes of Bob Dylan, The Smiths, The Replacements and Vic Chestnutt. *Tell It To The Dust* is as unpredictable as it is addicting, a quality that will keep it in my heavy rotation for a long time to come. (BN)
Baryon Records, www.baryonrecords.com

Partisans, The – Idiot Nation, CD

If not for the notation that this was recorded in 2003, you might think Sweden's The Partisans were contemporaries of The Clash, The Undertones and Stiff Little Fingers. Those bands are obviously influences, but The Partisans pull it off so well they sound like torchbearers instead of copycats. Great stuff. (JC)
Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

A Perfect Murder – Unbroken, CD

Typical tough-guy hardcore with lyrics about how tough their lives have been and how they are just so jaded now. Victory Records fans should enjoy their bland attempt to copy most bands in its catalog. (TK)
Victory, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Pinback – Summer In Abandon, CD

On first listen, *Summer In Abandon*, Pinback's third full-length, just seems like another soft-pop/indie-rock album: nice melodies, soothing and sweet, simple songcraft that's easy on the ears. But the beauty of Pinback's music is what you don't hear right away. It's much more complex than it seems: layering sound upon sound, melodies over harmonies and stacking sometimes smooth, sometimes barking vocals upon dueling guitar lines, drums and keys to produce the lushly orchestrated pop that seems so simple initially. What started as a low-fi side project for Zack Smith (3 Mile Pilot) and Robert Crow (Thingy, Heavy Vegetable) is now producing some of the most intense indie pop in play today. (LW)
Touch and Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, www.tgrec.com

Pine, The – Days Slipping By, 12"

So, you guys were a pop-punk band that discovered shoegazer, huh? (DH)
Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Pine, The / La Quiete – split, 7"

Italy's La Quiete deliver uplifting screamo, a pleasant surprise. There's

also an instrumental on their side. Using a moody, fuzzy guitar, The Pine is a post-punk/indie band that's quite moving as well. These bands are great at what they do, and I hope to hear more of both. (DM)
Broken Hearts Club, 1412 17th St., #C, Bakersfield, CA 93301, bhc@munozgym.com

Planes Mistaken For Stars – Up In Them Guts, CD

Like Converge's *You Fail Me* (also reviewed this issue), Up In Them Guts begins with a disorientingly mellow opening track, "To All Mothers," with its acoustic guitars and distant-sounding drumming. But as soon as the feedback stars wailing and the drums pound an ominous build-up for track two, "Belly Full Of Hell," you know PMFS haven't gone soft. Their brand of intense, frantic post-punk/hardcore may be tough to label, but it's nevertheless excellent. The vocals are also unique in that they're not quite screamed (most of the time) but not sung, and they're pretty low in the mix, which helps blend them into the songs' elements. The intensity rarely alleviates—check out the beginning of "Dancing On The Face Of The Panther" or "A Six Inch Valley." "No Prize Fighter" provides one of the few breathers on the record, but it lasts less than two minutes. Up In Them Guts is more or less an unrelenting assault by a band that has no interest in taking it easy—and they don't expect you to, either. Great stuff. (KR)
No Idea Records, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604-4636, www.noidearecords.com

Ponies – S/T, 7"

This 7" offers four tracks of wacky weirdness: from a dose of dancey, organ-laden party punk to a weird, minimal and offbeat poppy punk song with Cookie Monster grind vocals plus a sloppy, piano-backed gothic sorta track! Wha?! Silly, but fun. (MG)
Knife Chase, 2500 W. Alaska, Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Ponies In The Surf – A Demonstration, CDEP

This very likeable EP from brother/sister pair, Camille and Alexander McGregor, is reminiscent of Belle And Sebastian in its simple, offbeat folk-pop. The two play well together; whereas one plays it straight, the other plays the neurotic. This works as the centerpiece to their quirky songwriting and barebones orchestration. Although predominantly child-like, Camille's vocals sometimes take on a strained delivery that, when used, add a poorly behaved element to the otherwise innocently playful music. Whereas some of their melodies are at first off-putting, they quickly warm up, as on "Government Brand," with its unexpected danceable harmonies. "Je T'aime" is as well noteworthy, sung in French and characteristic of Camille and Alexander's eccentric sweetness. (AJA)
Self-released, www.poniesinthesurf.com

Poster Children, The – On The Offensive, CDEP

The Poster Children took a couple shots at the Bush administration on recent album *No More Songs About Sleep And Fire*. This six-song EP further realizes the group's election-year frustrations, offering covers of politically minded acts such as The Clash ("Clampdown"), X ("The New World") and XTC ("Complicated Game"). The Poster Children's interpretations put energy and attitude ahead of innovation, which is likely more than enough for the choir the group is preaching to. (TM)
Parasol, 303 West Griggs St., Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

Potshot – Dance To The Potshot Record, CD

Take Ramones-style pop-punk, Ben Weasel/Joe Queer vocals and One Cool Guy's heavy brass ska, and you'll end up with Japan's Potshot. Even the silly lyrics and indistinct vocals can't get in the way of the danceable melodies. A fun record to mindlessly skank around to. (BN)
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Power And The Glory, The – Call Me Armageddon, CD

Brutal metal/hardcore with bits of harmony thrown in. The lyrics aren't typical because they are more thought out and poetic than cliché. Although it sounds much like old Cave-In and Botch, it has its moments of originality. Not bad. (TK)
Deathwish Inc., 35 Congress St., Ste. 336, Salem, MA 01970-5567, www.deathwishinc.com

Pretty Flowers – S/T, CDEP

Right out of the gate, from the double-bass pedal intro to the "blah...blah...blah" male/female harmonies on this EP's first song, I knew I was in trouble. I listened to all four songs on this album. Make sure you don't do the same. (RL)
Bananasat Records / self-released, 242 South First, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.prettyflowers.org

Psychotics, The – Coronado, CDEP

I've been going around defending my attendance of a Face To Face farewell show, claiming that Face To Face was just as classic a punk band as Social Distortion, but that they fell victim to the heyday of '90s pop-punk. I'm realizing that the present day is an even tougher time for emerging pop bands. Great melodic bands today can get totally buried. Let's hope that doesn't happen to this insanely catchy band. The Psychotics are melodic, but still aggressive and not nearly as cheesy as most melodic punk bands. They come from California, which might be another nail in their coffin. But the vocalist is so good that these five tracks are irresistible. The chord progressions and lyrics are almost as mature as the vocals. This EP is dangerously good. (AE)
Northeast Records, PO Box 412226, Eagle Rock, CA 90041, www.northeastrecords.com

Q And Not U – Power, CD

All right kids, get your dancing shoes on, and don't take em off until you've worn out the sole and your feet are bleeding. It doesn't matter how you do it either—slow dance, the tango, crazy-ass windmill shit—just as long as you shake it, 'cause this record deserves that much from you. It's full of melodies and harmonies so tender you'd take them home to mom. The mathy nerdiness has taken a backseat to something like old school funk with its falsetto singing and uptempo swing. *Power's* lyrics are so refreshingly beautiful and harsh at the same time; sometimes they melt your heart so that it slides down to your toes and you just dance in the puddle with lines like "The loudest bomb is quieter than an eyelash against the fabric of your pillowcase" ("Wet Work"). (AA)
Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Quit Your Dayjob – S/T, CDEP

Annoying, childish electro-rock. What a waste of a compact disc. (AJ)
I Made This, Grindsgatan 33, S-118 57 Stockholm, Sweden, www.imadethis.se

Razzle – All Those Wasted (Y)Ears, CD-

I'd like to commend Razzle on their cleverly titled final release. But I have to agree with its sentiment. *All Those Wasted (Y)Ears* is frustratingly disjointed, as the band is constantly switching gears between hillbilly sludge and their apparent classic metal/rock aspirations. Sorry chums, nothing to see (or hear) here. (MS)
Pox World Empire, 1512 James St., Durham, NC 27707, www.poxworldempire.com

Red Lights Flash – Free..., CD

Red Lights Flash play total new-school hardcore with melody and emotive singing/yelling that sometimes recalls Thursday (or their ilk), but with more of a traditional hardcore sound. I guess they're from Austria, but their sound would have you thinking they were from the U.S. East Coast. Boring. (KM)
A-F Records, PO Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.a-frecords.com

Redlight Halo – Make Your Maker, CDEP

These guys play an impressive style of hard and heavy, swaggering r'n'r without ignoring some of their punk-rock influences (Fugazi, Jesus Lizard). Definitely above and beyond both the trendy blues-pop r'n'r sound and the popular sloppy garage sound. (MG)
Local Cannery, www.thelocalcannery.com; Crash Family, PO Box 541, Seal Beach, CA 90740-0541, www.crashfamily.com

Redressers – To Each According..., CD

These acoustic songs have no words, and I can't tell when a violin or a cello is playing. One thing I do know is when the double bass and drum-

Reruns: new reissues from punk rock's past.

Dispossessed, The – S/T, CDEP

Some confusion over whether to include this in the "demos" or "reissues" section. It's a CDR, which, from what I can tell, combines three songs recorded in 1986 and two songs recorded in 2002. What I do know is it's dark and danceable new wave with pop hooks and cool, lo-fi production. (JC)
Dagger Records, PO Box 380152, East Hartford, CT 06138

For Against – Echelons, CD

For Against is the best band you've never heard. Their debut record is a brilliant distillation of the formative years of goth new wave that preceded them and the 15 years of indie melancholia (i.e., shoegaze) that has followed Echelons. Greg Hill's drums are high-hat heavy and studded with the snap of the snare. Harry Dingman's keys and guitar lines are radiant arpeggios from within a wall of reverb. And Jeffrey Runnings' keys and bass bring the melodies into murky depths. But it's Runnings' dreamy voice and lyrics that make you feel like the band holds each

listener close to its heart. How something this ingenious emerged from 1980s Lincoln, Neb., is anyone's guess—just don't make the mistake of missing it the second time around. (CC)

Words On Music, 715 University Ave. SE, #201, Minneapolis, MN 55414, www.words-on-music.com

Paradox UK / Sanity Assassins – split, CD

Step-1 brings another "best of" reissue of obscure punk, and it's a worthy slice of thrash history. Paradox UK was a late '80s UK crossover band formed by Blitzkrieg frontman Spike. Sanity Assassins was a Connecticut band on TP0S who ended up with Spike as their singer later on. (AE)

Step-1 Music, PO Box 21, Tenterden, Kent TN 30 7ZZ, UK, www.step1music.com

Saving Face – S/T, CD

I am pretty sad to hear this, a remastered reissue of their first record, is Saving Face's second to last release. When I first heard the original, I didn't like it very much due to the poor recording. I guess that wasn't entirely

the case. Not to say I don't like it, because even though it is simple pop-punk with great vocal harmonization, it seems rudimentary to me compared to their amazing second full-length, *Holiday Cruise* 365. They had truly developed as a band, and even listening to this remastered recording, it just doesn't have the maturity they developed. There are a few live tracks at the end recorded in Green Bay, Wis. I feel bittersweet about their upcoming full-length; I know it's going to be great, but it's sad to see the band break up. Everything good has to end sometime. (TK)
High Fidelity Records, PO Box 1071, Grover Beach, CA 93483, www.highfidelityrecords.com

Seyarse – S/T, 7"

This reminds me of Swing Kids quite a bit. It's a bit more chaotic, but in a tasteful way. The songs are all pretty short, which makes me like it more. (DA)
Curtain Call Music, 403 N. Maple St., Prospect Heights, IL 60070, www.ccmilabel.com

Tristeza – Spine And Sensor, CD

This debut from San Diego's Tristeza was first released in 1999, and the band arrived as one of the more promising acts on the post-rock horizon. The jazzy psychedelics of "RMS 2000" sound like the soundtrack to some supernatural thunderstorm, and the tranquil bass on "Muerte En Tu Sueño" moves like a whale through an electronic ocean. If not as compelling as Tortoise, Tristeza injects some much-needed color into the genre. A new double-album is due next year. (TM)

Better Looking Records, 11041 Santa Monica Blvd., # 302, Los Angeles, CA 90025, www.betterlookingrecords.com

Witch Hunt – EPs & Crucial Chaos Radio Session, CD

Two EPs and a radio show from this political, female-fronted punk band. There's a whole bunch of screaming shared by their drummer. They hate the system and the unfair treatment of women and love aggro dirt punk. Meant to be listened to by angry ears. (DM)
Profane Existence Records, PO Box 8722 Minneapolis, MN 55422, www.profanexistence.com



mer get into a jazzy groove, you'd better watch out. This half-jazz/half-classical Oakland band knows how to swing. (DI)

Free Porcupine Society, www.freeporcupinesociety.com

Rehasher – Off Key Melodies, CD

Roger from Less Than Jake's new side project, this ultra-fast, extra-aggressive pop-punk band will please both pop-punk fans and some who are usually too cool for this type of punk. It's an astonishing album in that manages to stay catchy as hell, as it flies past at break-neck speed. (AE)

No Idea, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.noidearecords.com

Renee Heartfelt – Magdalene, CDEP

Renee Heartfelt play heavy, melodic indie punk with a strong groove to it. There is some very strong material here that reminds me of Samiam a bit in the vocal department. The songs have an emotional yearning in addition to a big fat guitar sound. (SJ)

Ilmeklin Records, PO Box 4064, Philadelphia, PA 19118, www.ilmeklinrecords.com

Rescue, The – Phone Numbers, CDEP

These United Edge CDs catch me off guard. The Rescue sound kind of moshy at first, with the puking-while-singing vocals. Then, out of nowhere, the songs change into emo-pop. They manage to juggle both genres the whole way through. Unfortunately, both of these genres are kind of lame. (DA)

United Edge Records, PO Box 342, Dalmien, SK S0K 1E0, UK, www.unitededge.com

Resilience – Sound Of Strength, CD

Not being a huge fan of oi, I may not be the best judge, but this positive/unity skin group has decent skanking tunes. Messages of fighting

(for unity, rights) and a strong anti-racist message are strong here. A real solid blast from the past if you dig the sound. (DM)

SOS Records, PO Box 3017 Corona, CA 92780-3017, www.sosrecords.us

Righteous Jams – Boston Straight Edge, 7"

This Boston sXe band has way too much attitude and lacks the traditional positive/motivational lyrics. But the bass-heavy sound is actually friendly. The "Righteous Dub" song that closes the 7" is really cool. I'm glad that Dave Smalley and Bobby Sullivan have left a lasting impression in the State. (DI)

Anger Management, Nijvelsebaan 161, 3060 Korbeek-dijle, Belgium, www.am-records.com

Ringenberg, Jason – Empire Builders, CD

Another Americana CD focusing on world events. There are lyrical tributes to Chief Joseph, the Tuskegee Airmen, Link Wray and even a Merle Haggard cover. There is some soul here, including a Gil Scott Heron-type drum-and-acoustic-bass number with poem, but this left me numb. (DI)

Yep Roc Records, www.yeproc.com

Risk Taken, The – End Commence, CDEP

This metal/hardcore hybrid does it up with blastbeats, crew vox, mosh breakdowns and the like. Y'know, like 80 percent of all sXe hardcore bands who have played since the early 1990s...is this an echo? (MG)

Stillborn Records, PO Box 3019, New Haven, CT 06515, www.stillbornrecords.com

Rock Star Club – Bienvenidos A Grand Y Western, CDEP

Lightly sprinkled metal with a whole lotta suck, Rock Star Club is as bad as their tongue in cheek name.

Self-released, www.rockstarclub.com

Demo-lition derby: CD-Rs

Akasha – Closer, CDR

Borrowing liberally from their post-hardcore contemporaries, Akasha's sound may lack direction, but makes up for it in intensity. Reducing the instrumental interludes and spicing up the vocals a bit will help their next record. (BN)

1000 S. Cooper, Memphis, TN 38194, www.akasha.freehosting.net

Bad Reaction – Six Songs, CDR

This reminds me of Reason To Believe—great melodic hardcore. The fact that this band has an ex-member of Fields Of Fire only sweetens the deal. Highly recommended. (DA)

1317 Waterloo St Apt. 4, Los Angeles, CA 90026
kashflag78@yahoo.com

Black Diamonds, The – S/T, CDR

Very strong female-fronted emo/indie rock. The music was great, but I found the vocals to be a bit melodramatic. (SJ)

www.theblackdiamondsrock.com

Black Horse – S/T, CDR

The guitar is rock 'n' roll. This band realizes that and runs with it. Dirty, stripped down rock with nods to the Cramps and Boss Hog.

www.blackhorserock.com

Black Tongue – S/T, CDR

Loose, straight-forward punk with a little added noise and shitty, off-key vocals. They're trying to be a more artsy Descendents. (EH)

www.blacktongue.org

Bread & Roses – S/T, CDR

Basement-recorded collection of Pogues-influenced drinking songs. Like any good MacGowan

fans, Bread & Roses fancy themselves poets, and it's up to you to decide if you need another Irish bar band. (TM)

22 Mansfield St., Allston, MA 02134, bostonruin@yahoo.com

Can Kickers, The – Mountain Dudes, CDR

I have to admit I'm impressed by this fiddle, washboard/drums, banjo band. At first I was like "What the fuck?" But after a few listens, I am digging this quite a bit. Not being overly schooled with this style of music, I find these folk tunes with Celtic leanings a real hoot. O' Punker, where art thou? Open your mind and check it out. (DM)

www.cankickers.com

Contribution – ST, CDR

Slow, bland rock/punk with decent, rough vocals. If they sped up a little, it might be decent. Sounds a little like Strawman. Interesting cover of Wipeout, though that seems to take parts from Agent Orange and the DK's "Police Truck." (NS)

www.skatepunk.net/contribution

Damn These Monkey Hands – S/T, CDR

Damn these monkey hands! Damn them all to hell! (Couldn't resist the Chuck Heston impression. Sorry.) Cool space/doom rock with detuned, ominous guitar riffs, and creepy vocals. (AJ)

www.damnthesemonkeyhands.com

Gratton, CDR

Epic, atmospheric rock that falls somewhere between Godspeed! You black Emperor and the soundtrack to *The War Of The Worlds*. Pretty standard sounding for the constellation records crowd, but they deserve praise for the gorgeous layout. (MS)

www13@prodigy.net

Greys, The – Attention Republicans, Go Fuck Yourself, CDR

Yep, the title pretty much says it all. That's the extent of the lyrics. It sounds like an obscure '60s song I heard of Timothy Leary ranting over Jimi Hendrix playing a fuzzed out bass, but not very good. (JJG)

www.thegreys.com

Hobo-A-Go-Go – CDR

Train-hopping is great and whatnot, but the current tide of Cometbus-idolizing hipsters is hardly the real deal. This is sonic derailment. (BM)

No contact information provided

Isles, The – Back To Terrific, CDR

Bright and wispy pop music that complements the NYC post-wave sound. Kind of spacey rock-lite for those counting calories, but still wanting to nod their heads to fatter sounds. Smart stuff. (DM)

www.theislesnyc.com

Johnny La Rock – 3 Song Demo, CDR

This is Punk Planet, not Techno Planet. I understand that you used to be punk, but this is ridiculous. (DA)

www.johnnylarock.com

Martes Martes – Dragoo Cat, CDR

Martes Martes' sparse beats and delicate trickle of strings is sweet and somber. But their overuse of high-pitched flute or recorder wrecks the deal. (CC)

No contact information provided

Rant Music – S/T, CDEP

The band name says it all on this one. Random songs with howling vocals and the beats, tempo and up-picking of ska. (CC)

www.rantmusic.com

Rocket Science – Eternal Holiday, CD

Gaz Coombes of Supergrass calls them the best band he's heard in ages, which is funny 'cause Rocket Science sound like a more rocked-out Supergrass. Production by The Dirtbombs' Jim Diamond gives these heavy Britpop rave-ups a nice layer of fuzz. "Pop Lover" and "Dressed to Kill" stand out. (JC)

Modular Recordings, PO Box 1666, Darlinghurst NSW 1300, Australia, www.modular-people.com

Rodriguez-Lopez, Omar A. – A Manual Dexterity – Soundtrack Volume 1, CD

Rodriguez-Lopez, of The Mars Volta, explores the soundtrack realm. These soundscapes conjure visions of desert highways and '70s-era cop shows. It veers from Spanish pieces to Pink Floyd moments, from horns to erratic soloing guitar. It will be a treasure to some and way out there for others. (BA)

GSL, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Rogers, Amanda – Daily News, CD

For the most part, Amanda Rogers' well-thought-out, piano-centric *Daily News* delivers, despite sliding mid-album into comfortable, redundant melodies. Roger's songwriting is very accessible and easily relateable. There is also something commanding in Rogers' feminine coo and low-key piano playing, regardless of its diminutive delivery. (AJA)

Immigrant Sun Records, PO Box 150711, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.immigrantsun.com

Rogue Forty – Underdogs, CD

Piano-driven rock for fans of Ben Folds and earlier Billy Joel. Not bad at all for moody, dark, rock tunes with interesting songs, but not my thing in the slightest. (DM)

Self-released, 402 E. 14th St., Apt. 14, New York, NY 10009, www.rogueforty.com

Rio De La Muerte – Lovers In Winter And Other Short Stories, CDR

A set of well-done narratives put to intensely strummed guitar, with occasional mandolin and drums. It's put together with care, including a couple zine-like booklets of song explanations and philosophical trinkets. (BA)

godothelung@hotmail.com

Smoke – S/T, CDR

Drug-damaged, Butthole Surfers-type stoner rock. It sounds like they got stoned and thought this would be a good idea. Bad vocals and music that makes no sense—in a bad way. (EH)

smjn53@earthlink.net

Sound 4 Sound – CDR

"Blah, blah, blah," loud Marshall stack bridge, "Blah, blah, blah," loud Marshall stack coda. Repeat. Unfortunately, I get too many of these. (RL)

www.thebandgoestotill.com

Tenebre – CDR

When it comes to mathy instrumentals, I'll take basic algebra over calculus any day. Therefore, Tenebre's ability to demonstrate beautiful intricacy without showboating is graciously welcomed. (BM)

www.geocities.com/tenebrerock

X Bolex, The – Out Of Context, CDR

Sad, (mostly) instrumental music with twinkly guitar parts, piano, xylophones and a whole other load of instruments creating some really beautiful songs. Reminds me of Mogwai or Godspeed. (KM)

thexbolex@yahoo.com

Rolling Blackouts - Black Is Beautiful CD

I sort of liked the '70s garage rock sound of this band, but it seemed a little cheesy. They are too caught in old styles of music to do anything new. The singer has a good voice, but all the lyrics seem insipid and insincere. This band has potential to be good, but is not there yet. (JJG)

Record Collection, 1223 Wilshire Blvd., #811 Santa Monica, CA 90403, www.recordcollectionmusic.com

♪ Rosa - Texarkana Get A High Five, 7"

At first it sounds like these four amateurs have vocal tracks that sound like first takes in need of seconds. Then the next listen shatters the hasty admonishment when the depth of purpose is realized and that utterly fascinating musical rides lie behind the unpolished poetry. They play saws, mandolins, washtub basses, banjos and a single snare drum, making innocent collages of friendships and uncertainties that can't help but warm your heart, if only for the combination of reverence and fear the band gives them. Rosa is endearingly simplistic. (SM)

Self-released, 4134 Wynona, Houston, TX 77087, rosapunk@yahoo.com

Rwake - If You Walk Before You Crawl You Crawl Before You Die, CD

Chug chug chug chug RAOWARRRR. Slow and low, heavy fucking metal, dude. The howled vocals and sprinkling of acoustic passages break things up nicely and are reminiscent of Alabama Thunderpussy. (RR)

At A Loss, PO Box 642, Crownsville, MD 21032-0642, www.atlossrecordings.com

Saddest Landscape - S/T, CD

Heartwrenching, chest-pounding, head-bobbing emotional hardcore that harkens back to the days before "emo" equaled whiney pop music and when sensitive punks cast votes for bands like Constatine Sankathi in the HeartattaCk readers poll. If you know what I'm talking about, check this out. (MG)

Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

♪ Sadies, The - Favourite Colours, CD

I know this is straight-up hippie music, but lord help me, I totally dig it. The Sadies play a kind of psychedelic folk-country-rock that's reminiscent of The Byrds and The Grateful Dead. Hate to make those comparisons, but it's the truth. Strong vocal harmonies, floating acoustic guitar lines, fuzzed-out lead guitars, lots of reverb, and tambourine hits on the back beats. While there's a certain plaintive moodiness in the air, the album has a real "good trip" feel. It's sort of like these dudes held a séance, channeled the spirit of Gram Parsons and came back with an excellent batch of tunes for a casual Sunday afternoon spent passin' joints and wastin' time with your best buds. (AJ)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

♪ Santen, Bill - In The Night Kitchen, CD

Oh troubadour, troubadour! Bill Santen's mournful ballads are the dim lights and dark shadows of the kitchen at night, inducing a mood that's pensive and lonesome. Santen's double-tracked vocals recall the sweet, somber sopranos of Simon & Garfunkel, and I mean that in the best way. Anyone can be melancholy, but only a few can make it meaningful. Santen's base of acoustic guitar (with the occasional tambourine, viola and harmonica) is steeped in the standards of traditional troubadours, and there's not much that makes it new, but that's the best part. Santen doesn't make it new-fangled; it stays fresh because it's backed with his solid musicianship as a guitar player, the sentiment behind his lyrics and the sincerity of his voice. When all is said and done, the best troubadours don't reinvent. If their heart is true, the music will always sound like it did the first time. (CC)

Sweatin' Betty Records, PO Box 742, Athens, GA 30603, www.hbht.com/sweatinbetty

Schoolyard Heroes - The Funeral Sciences, CD

A mish-a-gosh of spastic metal and hardcore, The Funeral Sciences is completely erratic, incohesive and ridiculous. With song titles like "Blood-Spattered Sundress" and "All-You-Can-Eat-Cancer," cheesy lyrics and operatic howls mixed with hardcore growling, it's no wonder I don't like this album—or anyone else should for that matter. (AJA)

Self-released, www.schoolyardheroes.com

Secondshot - Seven Years Bad Luck, CD

My god, it's the spirit of '96. This incredibly tight, aggro and melodic punk band à la NOFX/88 Fingers Louie play some solid tunes. I can see why these kids will probably get some huge recognition down the road. But really, I thought we were past post-Bad Religion/Pennywise bands. (DM)

Shove It Records / self-released, 165 Heritage Dr., Suite B, Scotts Valley, CA 95066, www.secondshotmusic.com

Self Destruct / Yates Kids, The - split, CD

Self Destruct sound like they like the Jerkoffs/Murderers split quite a bit. Not bad, but nothing remarkable. The Yates Kids have some of the worst lyrics I've read in awhile. Dude, let's get wasted and degrade women. Cool, yeah. (DA)

Shitpile Records / self-released, PO Box 158, Somers, WI 53171

Seamsters, The - Turning Tide, CD

This extremely light indie rock/pop music with psychedelic touches is shockingly interesting. The song titles and lyrics are pretty fucking silly, as on "The Ongoing Struggle Between Seamsters And Unbelief," but college rock is rarely as enjoyable as this. (AE)

Pete Records, 244 Grand Ave., Long Beach, CA, 90803, www.peterecords.com

Secret Sound Of The NSA, The - The Captain Future EP, CDEP

I can't believe I dig a band that is part ska, part pop-punk and part butt-rock. From the country-twanged, snap-along-able "Captain Future" to the dubbed-out "Radio Suicide" to the power ballad "The Train Home," these guys shamelessly create all-out pop songs written to be singles. Totally cheese-ball, yet totally addictive. (LW)

Self-released, www.the-nsa.com

Sermon, The - Volume, CD

Like The Mooney Suzuki and The Cherry Valence, The Sermon play amped-up boogie rock with a lotta riffs and swagger, but not much in the way of catchy songs that make for good records. They're probably great live, where The Sermon can get away with preaching to the choir. (JC)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Setup, The / Schematic Of A Waking Life - split, CD

The Setup play midtempo stomp metal/thunderous hardcore with dual vocalists. Nice pummeling breakdown in the first song. No generic mosh, but there are some chunky-ass riffs going on. Schematic are hectic, Jehu- or Rites Of Spring-styled punk. The singer even shares some of Guy's vocal inflection, through his slightly distorted, hoarse vocals. (NS)

Electric Human Project, 500 S. Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805, www.electrichumanproject.com

7-10 Split - Kill The Messenger, CD

Aggressive punk/metal with positive messages, catchy melodies and enough brutal breakdowns to please the metal heads. Despite the clear Christian punk affiliations, the writing is never preachy, which means the kids will eat this up and the parents will likely approve. What's wrong with that picture? (BN)

New School Records, PO Box 2094, Oregon City, OR 97045, www.newschoorecords.com

♪ Shepherd - The Coldest Day, CD

Eight songs by this German doom metal quartet recorded in Collage Park, Md., by Bruce Falkenburg. The CD also features the singing of Scott Wino on one song and guitar on three of them. It's pretty straight-forward metal, but the last track, "Doomsday," takes off into another realm. Thirteen minutes of sparse noise only to be met by a 10-minute silence then some untitled songs. Overall the lyrics are intelligent and political with understandable vocals and Black Sabbath guitar riffs and drum beats. Sadly this band has already broken up, but we should be thankful it was released at all. (DI)

Exile on Mainstream Records, Schlesische Straße 28, 1. Hof 10997, Berlin, Germany, www.mainstreamrecords.de

♪ Shivering, The - And Brand The Ground With Storm And Song, CD

I got to review a 7" by these guys a few issues back and was hoping to hear more from them. I lucked out. This CD is a collection of The Shivering's EP output as well as a comp track all on one disc. Their sound is early DC-inspired, emotional hardcore much like Rites Of Spring or Current, but

these guys also fuse in a little Bay Area-style influence that recalls bands such as Jawbreaker or J Church. I think this release would appeal very much to fans of No Idea Records, as a lot of those bands have a style comparable to The Shivering. Even though this collects a bunch of different releases, it still flows really well as a whole. A nice surprise that grew on me with each listen. (KM)

Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, www.alonerecords.com

Shoplifting - S/T, CDEP

Shoplifting's artistic and jumbled blend of punk and northwestern basement fervor comes as no surprise given their label and locale. Declaring war on cultural expectations and sexual/gender identities, free-formed lyrical assaults stand at the forefront of their fog-frenzied playing. Reminiscent of early Sonic Youth and Unwound. (BM)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 N.E. State St #418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Shotgun Monday - Death Mask, CDEP

This record is a blend of dissonant indie rock and screamo. Dark and moody, the music is solid, but the singing is bad—the vocals are distorted or otherwise processed to pick up the singer's slack. There is a glimpse of something good on this record; it's unique, but lacking. (EH)

Self-released, www.shotgunmonday.com

Sick56 / Higgins +- Out of a Black Pool, 7"

This English band plays fast and furious punk rock that stays at a steady boil. Their take on "California Uber Alles" (with prime minister Tony Blair substituted for Jerry Brown) is an interesting update of this Dead Kennedys classic. (JJG)

JSNTGM Records, PO Box 1025 Blackpool FY3 0FA, UK, www.jsntgm.com

♪ Signal Lost - Children Of The Wasteland, CD

Not being a regular listener to anarchy/political punk, I am taken back by the talent this female-fronted band. S.L. plays aggressive, midtempo hXc that is melodic like Pretty Girls, but with a more pressing message of passion and disappointment, but eager for change. Well done, well played. If these kids stick it out for a bit, I'm sure they will get some well-deserved recognition in the scene. (DM)

Prank Records, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892, www.prankrecords.com

Since By Man - A Love Hate Relationship, CDEP

These guys are from Milwaukee, so I'd better not be too harsh, or they might beat me up. Actually I'm sure they're too busy shopping for new sleeveless T-shirts to care. Kidding aside, this is actually pretty good. It has an artsy hardcore sound mixed with the occasional Quicksand-style riff. Approved. (DA)

Revelation, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

Sirens - Long Distance Calling, 7"

Sirens play earnest pop punk that reminds me of long-gone bands like Jolt and Weston. This record might have been run-of-the-mill 10 years ago, but there are so few bands doing this sort of thing these days that it sounds surprisingly refreshing. (JC)

1-2-3-4 Go! Records, c/o S. Stevenson, 732 56th St., Oakland, CA 94609, www.1234gorecords.com

Skeemin' NoGoods - S/T, CD

Muscle-car punk rock from this unfortunately named Detroit combo. With a pedigree that includes Speedball, Necros, Laughing Hyenas and The Fags, it should be no surprise that these guys know what they're doing. The guy from The Fags writes most of the songs, so they're plenty catchy. I'm into it. (JC)

Idol Records, PO Box 720043, Dallas, TX 75372, www.idolrecords.com

Slater - S/T, CD

There are two major problems with this album. First, it's about ten years too late. Second, they can't decide if they want to be hard like Alice In Chains or poppy like the Pixies. It's this indecision leaves the album inconsistent and hard to follow. (MP)

Fork In Hand Records, PO Box 230023, Boston, MA 02123, www.forkinhand.com

Sleeping, The - Believe What We Tell You, CD

Overtly commercial-sounding emo with a slight metal edge. Strictly for



the kiddies. Standard deal: "No one understands me, my parents suck, and my heart's-a-burstin'. Maybe if I play this song, scream a bit and then sing the chorus in my most earnest voice, I'll be a happy camper." (AJ)
One Day Savior, PO Box 372, Williston Park, NY 11596, www.onedaysavior.com

Slingshot Dakota – Keener Sighs, CD

I'm on the fence with this one. Overall, the keyboard/piano-heavy songs are good, but the male vocals are distracting. They don't seem to fit with the general sound, especially when he seems to yell unnecessarily. I say stick with the female vocalist, and you've got a decent record. (MP)
Immigrant Sun Records

Slow Signal Fade, The – Through The Opaque Air, CDEP

Through *The Opaque Air* moves along at a steady pace, avoiding the pitfalls of its heavy melodies and shoegaze grooves with an overall result being more attractive than apathetic. The singer sounds slightly like Dolores O'Riordan (The Cranberries), but with less flux in her voice, whetting the group's weighty melodies. (AJA)
Stroll Music, 1851 N. Gramercy Pl., Los Angeles, CA 90028, www.strollmusic.com

A Small Victory – El Camino, CD

It is bands like this bland, dark, overproduced pop outfit that give Warped Tour culture a bad name. It's hard to put a finger on why this murky bullshit annoyed me so much, but there's a dismal shallowness to the elongated verses that made me want to wretch. (AE)
Lobster Records, PO Box 1473, Santa Barbara, CA 93102, www.lobsterrecords.com

Smops, Rip – Beautiful Frustration, CD

There are two types of solo musicians: ones who have a great vision and have a hard time playing with others because they are on different artistic plain; and people like Rip, who try to play all the instruments, but can't sing and, in the process, waste recording tape, studio time, electricity, air, plastic CD cases and my time. What makes someone's ego so big that they release crappy music? If I am getting old and losing my sense of humor, please let me know. He didn't play bass on the CD, but the back cover photo has him holding or wearing a bass. (DI)
Self-released, 38 Robin Park Blvd. Oberlin, OH 44074, www.ripsmops.net

Snack Truck – Harpoon, CD

This two-piece provides you with plenty of noise, but with hints of melody and song structure. Don't think it's all loud; the music has a nice range and, when put together in a sequential fashion, it works. Heavy yet quiet, melodic yet noisy. Awesome. (EH)
The Perpetual Motion Machine, PO Box 7364, Richmond, VA 23221, www.theperpetualmotionmachine.com

Snowblood – The Human Tragedy, CD

This is totally my favorite release from this issue, and I must have listened to it a couple dozen times before I remembered I had other things to review. Heavy music fans of any genre will find something to love about this band. The vocals range from yelling and growling to soft whispers. The guitars go from speedy technical riffs to slow, crushing doom riffs that will give you chills and make you forget how many bong hits you just took. The overall sound combines the prog-metal of bands like Tool with the technical proficiency of bands like Botch or Converge without actually sounding like any of those bands. Snowblood have a refreshingly original sound, and the structures change so often within each song that you might not know when one song ends and another begins. A pleasant surprise and definitely worth a listen. (KM)
Lawgiver Records, PO Box 17188, Edinburgh, EH11 2WX, Scotland, www.lawgiverrecords.co.uk

Society's Finest – Love, Murder And A Three Letter Word, CD

Metal core that leans more toward the metal side with double bass and blast beats. The guitars switch from double picking to intricate to chugging seamlessly. Sounds a lot like older thrash metal with death-metal vocals, similar to At The Gates or current Swedish metal. Good stuff. (NS)
Hand Of Hope, PO Box 24913, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.handofohope.com

Sonic, Rob – Telicatsen, CD

Refreshing independently produced hip-hop that isn't too socially aware that it makes you feel guilty or too bling-bling that it makes you feel dirty. The beats are all self-produced and pretty tight. (AA)
Definitive Jux, 451 Greenwich St., #507, New York, NY 10013, www.definitivejux.net

Smops, Rip – Eliminate Freedom, CDEP

Rip Smops creates some weirdness and plays all the music: guitars, keyboards, various tapes and kalimba thumb-piano. The music is complex yet not engrossing. The anti-Bush lyrics though are commendable: "Eliminate freedom so united we can stand." Otherwise, I was glad the EP was brief. (BA)
Self-released, 38 Robin Park Boulevard, Oberlin, OH 44074, www.ripsmops.net

South, The / Hypatia – split, 12"

The South open up this split with a heavy hardcore sound and screamed vocals spreading political views. Hypatia close it out with heavy trash hardcore with both socially and politically aware writing. Get your copy on the limited pink marble vinyl and with a hand screened cover. (BN)
Square Of Opposition, 2935 Fairview St. Bethlehem, PA 18020; Hate The Eighties, 204 Belvidere St. Nazareth, PA 18064, www.hatetheeighties.com; Dead Tank, 1007 Acosta St. Apt. 2, Jacksonville, FL 32204, www.deadtankdistro.com

Southerly – Best Dressed And Expressionless, CD

Southerly, or Krist Krueger, has been playing around the U.S. for a little over a year now supporting a six-song EP called *Expressionless*. He is a solo artist with just an acoustic guitar live, but on *Best Dressed And Expressionless*, he has incorporated drums, piano, cello, viola, trumpet and a few more instruments to accent the melancholy of his songs. It's somewhat a concept album in memory of four people close to him that have died over the past year. There are four "Accidentals" throughout the record written about four people he had lost, touching on the things he has learned from them in his life. The songs are especially well-written and quite original. Sad and Beautiful melodies that are nicely layered by the additional instruments. This is a great CD to listen to if you want to sit back and reflect on your life. (TK)
Dead Letter Records, PO Box 17882, St. Paul, MN 55117, www.deadletterrecords.net

Spalding Rockwell – Kate, CD

Is electroclash the new disco? Is Italian disco the ironic new thing? I am voting yes, and if you like style over substance, you'll probably dig this. Mind your uncle Joe: Passion is a fashion. (RL)
Defend Music Inc., 350 Seventh Ave., 15th Floor, New York, NY 10001, www.defendmusic.com

Spectacle, The – Rope Or Guillotine, CD

Norwegian hardcore that sounds similar at times to Catharsis and His Hero Is Gone at others. Raw and emotional, this is a dynamic record. They sound like they would be an amazing live band, as Catharsis once was. I guess I wouldn't expect anything less from Crimethinc. (TK)
Crimethinc, 2695 Rangelwood Drive, Atlanta, GA 30345, www.crimethinc.com

Stagger, Leeroy – Dear Love, CD

On *Dear Love*, young Leeroy Stagger attempts to balance his punk-rock past with his current alt-country leanings, with mixed results. At his best ("Paint A Picture," "White Picket Fences"), he lets loose like a twanged-out Johnny Thunders and sneers his way through some big, rowdy rockers. However, some of the more "down home" tracks, like "Bloody Guitars," feel a bit forced. Maybe it has to do with his age (21), but it sounds like he's still breaking in his cowboy boots and relying too much on "tear-in-my-beer" formula songwriting. There's some promising material here, for sure. This is a good start, but let's see what he does with the country stuff once he's gone a few more notches above the drinking age. (AJ)
Magic Teeth Records / self-released, 3041 Austin Avenue, Victoria, BC V8Z 2K9, Canada, www.leeroystagger.com

Stalkers – Sun's Coming Up / I Couldn't Wait To Get Home, 7"

This reminds me of The Flamin' Groovies—roots rock with a punk influence. They do it well; it sounds like '50s rock 'n' roll, but has enough energy to keep it from sounding stale. (JGG)
Dollar Record Records, www.dollarrecord.com

Stand & Fight – Together We Win, CD

Together We Win is the second CD by Stand & Fight that has made me want to dance. The positive California straight-edge lyrics that will raise your self-esteem level, and the sound is early '90s hardcore with two guitars. (DI)
Bridge Nine, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

State Of Fear – Discography, CD

Ah, thrash: lightning-fast guitars, indecipherable yelling by dual vocalists, the relentless pounding of the drums, with each song clocking in under two minutes. This 26-song discography would be a welcome addition to any thrash fan's collection. The sociopolitical lyrics were awesome and even had explanations. Get this! (KM)
Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profanexistence.com

Stinking Lizaveta – Caught Between Worlds, CD

One of the most underrated East Coast bands of the past 10 years, Stinking Lizaveta has a new record that's 60 minutes of power trio instrumental music. Although it could easily be written off as *The Process Of Weeding Out* by Black Flag, it'd be a shame to do that. As the title suggests, this band bends sounds that ranging from metal, punk and jazz. The only vocal utterance here is from the band tour buddy and dog, making an appearance by barking for a few measures. If you want to take a magical trip among realms, buckle up and enjoy these 16 wonderful songs from this Philly band. (DI)
At a Loss, PO Box 642, Crownsville, MD 21032-0642, www.atlossrecordings.com

Straylight Run – S/T, CD

Even though I respected Straylight Run for the principles that led to their formation, I have to confess the MP3s they released last year didn't do much for me. Here were two former members of emo darlings Taking Back Sunday making a 180-degree turn into piano-infused, sweeping pop songs—not unlike Blake Schwarzenbach did with Jets To Brazil after Jawbreaker. Gone here is the TBS formula that guitarist/singer John Nolan resented: heavy intro, muted/quiet verse, loud chorus, big rock ending. (Although many songs here have "big" endings.) As if to re-emphasize their change in approach, this disc opens with the slowest, most subdued track on the CD, "The Perfect Ending." Straylight's self-titled debut is by no means morose, though; even the songs that initially lack a quicker tempo all seem to crescendo with lots of power created by numerous sonic layers. Then there's the I Am The World Trade Center-esque "Tool Sheds And Hot Tubs," where keyboardist Michelle Nolan takes over vocal duties for an electro-pop dance song. It sticks out here big time, and I'd argue should have been cut. However, "Now It's Done," another Michelle song, fits the record's sound better. The CD's enhanced content includes a lot of studio footage—worth viewing for diehard fans or for people who don't believe how boring recording really is. *Straylight Run* grows on you with each listen, and chances are you'll notice something new nearly every time. This is a bold, ambitious debut for a band that wanted to make a statement. Mission accomplished—and then some. (KR)
Victory, Ste. 504, 346 N. Justine St., Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Suburban Sound, The – Through The Bull, CDEP

These guys aim to update classic rock for today to varying results. With a horn section and a bit of radio-friendly blandness, they come off as more of a milquetoast Rocket From The Tombs than the new Rolling Stones. (RR)
Buzzgrinder Records, www.buzzgrinderrecords.com

Suppression – Release The Piranha, CD

Suppression incorporates numerous elements and styles into one enjoyable, noisy romp. It's pissed and thunderous, then small and quiet yet frantic. There are some hints of grind, but much more intricate, with lyrics that sound like beat poetry at times. Great record. (EH)
UnderRadar, PO Box 1641, Seaford, NY 11783, www.underadar.com

Switchblade – S/T, CD

Slap on some headphones and let this crawl around your ears. Nearly vocal-free, churning Swedish post-hardcore like you'd expect from the Midwest. It's heavy, groove-heavy and all around rad. (RR)
Icarus Records, www.icarusrecords.com

Talk Engine – Something For Junior, CD Single

Talk Engine's message is more interesting than their music. The track's subtitle is "On The Occasion Of George W. Bush's LAST Birthday in the White House." The lyrics—spat out in poetic timing—include: "enjoy your birthday, junior, you're about to get fired / this government of blood money is being retired." (CC)

Self-released, PO Box 1401, New York City, NY 10026

Teen Wheat – Vs. Old Wheat, CD

Teen Wheat is yet another band hoping to destroy rock 'n' roll's false idols by turning their fuzzed out, Sonic Youth-inspired distortion up to 11. Vs. Old Wheat is a more melodic take on Hot Snakes and The Icarus Line, but their no-frills rock neither offends nor electrifies me. Meh. (MS)

Dead Medium, 411 Florida Avenue Atlanta, GA 30316, www.deadmedium.com

Teeth, The – More Songs About Money And Animals, CD

Not to be confused with the Philadelphia band of the same name, The Teeth (of Ann Arbor, Mich.) have a harsh, strained Dischord-ish sound. In fact, they're reminiscent of Dischord's Black Eyes, perhaps with less screamy dissonance and more stop-start dynamics. The Teeth have an angular, percussive sound that fuses the best in Midwest math rock with a fresh, upbeat East Coast vibe. (JG)

Self-released, 426 Second St., Apt. 4, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, www.theteethband.com

Terror – One With The Underdogs, CD

After I liked their first EP, this didn't disappoint. So many bands play a heavier style of hardcore, but Terror is one of the best. They use the double kick pedal tastefully and have brutal, but not studio-enhanced, vocals. I don't like many bands like this, but Terror executes this sound perfectly. (DA)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724 www.trustkill.com

Thee Oh No's – S/T, CDEP

Thee Oh No's are a goofy garage band with keyboards. They play '60s style garage rock, and the band members—get this—wear masks on stage. What will they think of next? Influenced by similar acts such as The Mummies, they're much better than most of the competition. This EP is one that any fan of this type of punk will go nuts over. Lots of these bands go for an older sound, but are more influenced by '70s punk than '60s garage rock. Thee Oh No's are more studied than those other poser groups, and they remind me of some of the bands on the '60s garage-punk compilations that were coming out en masse in the '80s and '90s. (AE)

Mask Records, PO Box 41753, Mesa, AZ 85274, home.earthlink.net/~punko/index.html

Thema Eleven – Choose Your Beast, CDEP

Quality post-hXc songs from the Czech Republic that make me enjoy that country more than I already did. Moody, rocking with little bit of groove, it's reminiscent of the U.S. post-hXc scene during the mid-'90s. Heavy on passion, guitar distortion with great build-ups. (DM)

Self-released, c/o Marek Haltuf, Severní 770, 55101 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, www.themall.czechcore.cz

These Arms Are Snakes – Oxeneers Or The Lion Sleeps When Its Antelope Go Home, CD

It's nice to know that, amongst the shit storm commonly referred to as modern hardcore, something is still alive and kicking. In a full-forced and ruthlessly executed audible beat-down, TAAS have assembled a hair-raising collection of tracks, destined to cripple all of those in their wake. Among the cyclonic banter of vocal wails, eerie organ lines pounce out from walls of tetanus-lined guitars, while spiked anvil drums drop from 100 stories up. Ears become minced meat. Lyrically, Steve Sneere's thematically fueled observations and critiques of America's dependence and drive for the almighty dollar are equally as sharp and aggressive as the music. Gnashing with sheer precision and head-turning style alteration, TAAS are a beacon of light in hardcore's currently bleak era. Put up your dukes, these vets ain't f'in around. (BM)

Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd, Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetreec.com

Thin Man, The – H.M.S. Mondegreen, CD

With accordion, banjo, cello and other assorted instruments, The Thin Man play an eclectic mix of music. Kennedy Greenrod's low baritone voice takes charge throughout the CD, leading us on a journey through diverse musical styles. "The Good Lord Shows His Face" and "The Ballad of A+M" sound like cabaret aboard a pirate ship. It makes me want to whip out a bottle of rum even if I don't drink anymore. "OK Fine" shows that a couple of well-arranged horns can sound like a full marching band. "Take Me Home" is about a drunken stupor, and "Sometime Soon" leaves us with a reflective ballad. (SJ)

Skin and Bone / self-released, PO Box 2203, Chicago, IL 60690, www.thinmansongs.com

Those 2 Busters – Unindie Listening, CD

A mix CD in traditional hip-hop style, but incorporating groups like the Violent Femmes and Sonic Youth with folks like MF DOOM, Charizma and Peanut Butter Wolf. Also, just like a street-style mix, it's "hosted" by Saturday Night Live cast member Fred Armisen. This is pretty cool. (DH)

Self-released, www.avejay.com

Those Who Wait – S/T, CD

I hate to break out the bad punnery here, but it's so ripe for the pickin': Those Who Wait should have waited, or rather they should have just refrained from putting out a CD. Self-indulgent, generic alterna-rock with one song wasting away your life for an entire 14 minutes. (AA)

Self-released, www.thosewhowait.net

Tober – Harajuku No Emo Ko, CDEP

Awesome indie rock—really catchy stuff with cute li'l emo lyrics like "I just want to be the song in your jukebox." If that doesn't tell you enough, their press pic is them in a record store à la High Fidelity. A bit Versus, a bit Small Factory and all good. (JG)

Dork Rock Records, www.dorkrock.com

Today Is The Day – Kiss The Pig, CD

Steve Austin and crew come blasting on all cylinders for the newest Today Is The Day release. To say that this record is a departure from their old sound would make no sense, as they've never really had any specific sound. Kiss The Pig, though, is stuck on one gear: fast. Save for "Platinum Pussy," all of the songs cruise right by with no compromise whatsoever. Unfortunately, the one-sheet that was included with this CD was for their last record, so I have no idea who made it through the revolving door of their practice space. Whoever they are, they did the job right. The production seems a bit rushed and thin, but the thrown-together feel complements the songs nicely as they waste no time getting things started. Grind fans take note: There are tons of blasts on this record, but those who prefer the sludgier Today Is The Day sound might not enjoy this as much. (DH)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Today's Tomorrow – S/T CDEP

Twinkly guitars, earnest, nasally vocals, soft and quiet parts. Do they still call this shit emo?

Self-released, www.todaystomorrow.com

Too Pure To Die – We Are A Weapon, CD

More paint-by-numbers straightedge hardcore with chugga parts and revenge lyrics. Average, but I have a feeling that it could grow on me as there are some refreshing and unexpected riffs here and there (1:00 mark on "Fight To Win"), but these guys are a tad too militant for me. (DH)

State of the Art, PO Box 11876, Milwaukee, WI 53211, www.stateoftheartrecordings.com

Total Chaos – Punk Invasion, CD

I think I've seen this band's patches on quite a few jean jackets over the years, so I'm sure if you're ever going to get this you already own it. Total Chaos play totally furious punk rock that makes all the kids with the mohawks and leather jackets smile. (KM)

SOS Records, PO Box 3017, Corona, CA 92678-3017, www.sosrecords.us

Tracker – Blankets, CD

A soundtrack for Craig Thompson's illustrated novel *Blankets*, John Askew's instrumentation is as beautifully expressive as the novel's pic-

tures. With its moody orchestration, the music itself seems to create its own story. The tone shifts between vibrancy and serenity, both working effectively. Next stop for Askew: a Lion King sequel. (MS)

FILMguerrero PO Box 14414 Portland, OR 97293, www.filmg.com

A Trillion Barnacle Lapse – A Cruise In Heaven, CD

A Trillion Barnacle Lapse is all about stitching together jagged guitar and dreamy synth. The problem is that the seams in the production—seams between organic instruments and programmed parts—are too obvious, as are the Robert Smith vocal stylings. What saves it all is their great ear for warm melodies. (CC)

The Electric Human Project, 500 South Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805, www.electrichumanproject.com

Turing Machine – Zwei, CD

After some time under the radar, Turing Machine has returned, their uptempo beastly instrumental sounds altered, yet still fiercely potent. Moving away from their trademark gargantuan drum-and-bass synopsations, the band is now placing a newfound emphasis on guttural, distorted guitars, thus adding a slight sense of disorganized psychedelics to the mix. Now shadowed by bone-grinding abstract melody, Turing Machine's pedal-to-the-floor rhythmic antics are still ever-present, but left slightly out of focus in a haze of overdriven six strings. For those of you who are familiar with the band, Zwei serves up an ample amount of the expected gems, while charging full blast into new ground, sparking intrigue and interest. For the newcomers, I'd suggest starting with the band's more accessible Jade Tree release, *A New Machine For Living*, before chartering into the challenging depths of their latest release. (BM)

French Kiss, Ste. 229, 111 E. 14th St., New York, NY 10003, www.frenchkissrecords.com

12 Step Rebels – Go Go Graveyard Rockin', CD

Standard psychobilly, complete with horror-flick lyrics, double-time beats and moderately catchy hooks. Been done a million times. More importantly, it's been done way better. (AJ)

Dead Body Wreckers, 3727 W Magnolia Blvd. #231, Burbank, CA 91510, www.deadbodywreckers.com

Twenty To One – Suburban Battlecry, 7"

Six songs of street punk blended with youth-crew hardcore. Seeing as this is the beginning of their career, this straightedge band should be pleasing fans down the road with their high energy tunes. Boston represent! (DM)

FNS Records, PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.net

Two Cow Garage – The Wall Against Our Back, CD

In this garage you'll find passionate, whiskey-soaked country-rock. It's good stuff, very straight-shooting and honest. So-called alt-country isn't a genre I'm too familiar with, but if I could be assured there are more bands like Two Cow Garage out there, I'd be happy to explore more. (JC)

Self-released, www.twocowgarage.com

Tyrades – I Am Homicide, 7"

If you haven't heard the Tyrades yet, don't even bother getting up from underneath your giant pile of lame. This single shows off the best of what they've done so far and is just so purely effin' great that you should just buy it now. Fast, spastic, punky r'n'r done right. (MG)

Shit Sandwich, 3107 N. Rockwell, Chicago, IL 60618, www.shitsandwichrecords.com

Ulcers, The – Golden Showers EP, 7"

The Ulcers are a wonderful, sleazy garage punk 'n' roll band from London. Their influences span from prepunk garage to '77 punk to midcareer GG Allin. The end result is a gleefully vicious aural attack. These seven songs are intended to offend, but sleaze sophisticates will respond with laughter instead of tears to songs such as "Bedpost," "Party In My Pants" and "Golden Shower." They also have a full-length out on Damaged Goods, which came out at roughly the same time. The guitars are distorted and heavy, and the vocals are a guttural mess, just how we like it. I don't know if the band or their fans are more likely to get naked when they play live, but surely some public nudity must coincide with this sexually charged rock. (AE)

Oddball Records, www.oddballrecords.co.uk

**Umbrella Sequence, The – Sparkler Cliché, CD**

Armed with a Moog Liberation keyboard, a drum machine and other retro equipment, *Sparkler Cliché* is a welcome cliché of vintage sounds augmented with acoustic guitars and fuzzy electric guitars. (DI)
Ohev Records, PO Box 772121, Coral Springs, FL 33077, www.ohevrecords.com

Universum — S/T, CD

I like this band. They're high energy and really melodic, without being cutesy. The record sounds really good until the female singer comes in on track five with her annoying/sultry "I'm such a sexy singer" voice, which just makes you want to puke. (JG)
Free Dimension Records, www.freedomdimension.cz

Unloveables, The – Crush Boyfriend Heartbreak, CD

The Unloveables play crunchy power pop with dual lady harmonizing and cutesy lyrics. I'm immediately reminded of the Dance Hall Crashers if they lost the ska influence and sounded more like Green Day. I liked this. It was melodic, nicely produced, and the harmonies were sweet. (KM)
Whoa Oh Records, 21-36 43rd St., Astoria, NY 11105, www.whoaohrecords.com

Upsidedown, The – Trust Electricity, CD

Most of the songs sound like The Jesus And Mary Chain. The vocals are sung breathily with lots of reverb. Although I like some of The Jesus And Mary Chain's work, this band can't seem to carve out its own sound. (JJG)
Reverb Records, 2736 N. Argyle, Portland, OR 97217, www.reverbrecords.net

Upwelling, The – S/T, CDEP

The Upwelling's post-rock mergence with Britpop rock sometimes curiously sounds like the new, tantric Sting. Sting aside, this is a really good EP. The songs, which are dynamic and well constructed, have all their elements integrated. Everything shows itself and fades out equally—an impressive set of songs. (AJA)
Self-released, 109 S. Fourth St., Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.theupwelling.com

Uva, Mike – Where Have You Been, CD

Another variation on the break-up album theme, *Where Have You Been* laces his sad stories together with complex electric and folk-guitar lines, graceful bass lines, hazy keyboards, tape loops and twinkling electric-piano melodies. The first track, "Stuck In My Head," sets up the affecting songs to come with Uva playing slide guitar and singing: "It's three months with no reply / where have you gone? / My friends are giving up on telling me to move on." "Trophy To Bear," another standout, is a sad ballad for estranged lovers in which Uva invokes the haunting croon of Roy Orbison, another perpetual loser in love. The voices of Uva and vocalist Courtney Christensen blend beautifully on the tracks they sing together, but the weakest tracks are the two that Uva leaves the singing to entirely to his female cohort. Her voice lacks substance enough to carry a song all on her own. Overall, this is an excellent singer-songwriter effort. (LW)
Collectible Escalators, 10803 Lake Avenue Suite 202, Cleveland, OH 44102, www.collectibleescalators.com

Vandals, The / Dropkick Murphys – One For The Ages, split 7"

Fat City Magazine brings together two of punk's heavyweights for a quick romp. The Murphys deliver a live recording of "Time To Go" while the Vandals supply "Change The World With My Hockey Stick" off of the Glory Daze soundtrack. Collectors will want to track this one down. (BN)
Fat City, PO Box 120196, Boston, MA 02112, www.fatcityrockers.com

Varukers – Murder / Nothing's Changed, CD

Song titles from this ground-breaking disc include, "Murder," "Hatred," "Fuck You Up," "Who The Fuck" and "Fake." The Velvet Underground had nothin' on these guys. (RL)
Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Villains, The – Crime Of Life / Reflexive Paranoia, 7"

Two songs that are old-school street punk in a political vein. Brutal tunes that make you want to fight people. I'm circle dancing in my bedroom

and sucker punching my cat right now. (DM)
FMS Records, PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130, www.fmsboston.net

Visqueen – Sunset On Dateland, CD

I loved their debut last year, and I'm pleased to say that Seattle's Visqueen trump the sophomore slump. With Fastbacks vet Kim Warnick on bass and the powerful-yet-playful singing of guitarist Rachel Flotard, Visqueen play bouncy pop punk that's sweeter than the iced tea down South. (JC)
BlueDisque Records, PO BOX 16362, Seattle, WA 98116, www.bluedisc.com

Visitations, The – Propaganda, CD

It's said that a Republican administration means boom-times for political punk rock. *Propaganda* is an odd collection of very political songs ranging from Gang Of Four-style post-punk to folky strumming to almost Capitol Steps-like political novelty songs. Some tunes are stronger than others, but the politics are all right on. (JC)
Self-released, www.thevisitations.com

Voices In The Wire – Signals In Transmission, CD

Voices In The Wire's melodic hardcore is a long-established style, but few bands do it this well. Older Hot Water Music and Samiam come to mind. It's intense, but melodic and incredibly catchy. *Signals In Transmission* reminds you that classic sounds, when done right, are never out of style. (KR)
Eyeball Records, PO Box 179, Kearny, NJ 07032, www.eyeballrecords.com

Volcano Vulture – Diffusion, CDEP

Volcano Vulture, a.k.a. Ben Shepard, has done it: The art of my-first-four-track recording has been mastered. Hooray for struggling to switch barre chords in time to catch the next off-time drum beat, out-of-key vocals, inaudible master levels and the graphic design abilities of a blind kindergartener. (BM)
Bad Bunny Records, 52 Strickland Lane, Ardmore, TN 38449, volcanovulture@yahoo.com

Vote, The – All Things Considered, CD

The Vote are four men with musical multiple-personality disorder: dreamy piano-led pieces to forth full-blown Piebald via early '90s one-hit wonder style. Then they blend it all together, like the mouth of someone who tried every flavor of popsicle in a 12-count box. They can get angry or stay where they are. Either way's fine with them. (SM)
VMS Records, 100 E. 23rd St., Baltimore, MD 21218, www.morphius.com

We're All Broken – Campaign Moving Slow, CD

Like New Jersey counterparts Thursday, *We're All Broken* mine the emotional hardcore territory. *Campaign Moving Slow* is the act's first full-length, and it's full of wailing vocals, loud/soft dynamics and the occasional sing-along chorus ("Ambrosia"). (TM)
Fidelity Records, PO Box 152, Hillsdale, NJ 07642, www.fidelityrecords.com/

Weight, The – Ten Mile Grace, CD

Best album of the batch. The Weight is propelled by strong musicianship, a thorough understanding of two genres (country and rock) and the strong songwriting ability of Joseph Plunket. Whether it's steel pedal or distorted guitar, this album fails to falter. The Boss and Paul Westerberg are obvious influences, but Plunkett and Co. are clever enough to make it on their own. Unfortunately, I have a feeling this band might fall into a Velvet Underground/Mission of Burma/New York Dolls style rut. They're too good and just outside the radar of what is popular at the moment. I wish The Weight the full bars and venues they deserve. Check 'em out. (RL)
Sabot Productions, PO Box 28, Gainesville, FL 32602-0028, www.sabotproductions.net

Westminster Abbey, The – Oh No, It's An EP, CDEP

Remember the scene from *Field Of Dreams* where James Earl Jones uses a fumigator to expedite the removal of Kevin Costner from his apartment and back into the '60s? It always got me thinking that maybe there are some people who actually do believe in visitors from other decades and that there is a simple way to repel them back to their rightful time period. If James Earl Jones was right back in 1989, there exists a way for cross-generational motion, and The Westminster Abbey know about it. They've dipped themselves like ice cream cones into a vat of harden-

ing 1960s caramel to produce a retroactive sound of hyper-harmonizing, fuzzed-out guitar rock that, while post-dated, should never be left dead. Their passionate reassembling of the nuts and bolts of the best from those days is redressed with an Essex Green/Ladybug Transistor toffee that kills. (SM)

I Surrender Records, 314 Hyslip Ave., Westfield, NJ 07090, www.i-surrender.com

Wet Confetti – This Is So Illegal (Do It Fast), CD

The kind of angular, new-wave influenced rock that's all the rage these days. Singer Alberta Poon gives the band a sexy sort of disenchantment, but abrasiveness is given more credence than accessibility. (TM)
Self-released, www.wetconfetti.com

Williams, Saul – S/T, CD

Tackling subject matter from politics to love and everything in between, Saul Williams delivers with confidence and has his occasional moments of mastery. However, his prose and more so his music, remain raggedly inconsistent. Stumbling from gripping poetic explosives to obnoxious clichés, for every move of genius there is one of utter mediocrity to render the prior useless. Self described as "punk-hop," the end result of the full-length is that of an all-you-can-eat genre buffet, sneeze guard-less and organized without mercy. Styles are fused together carelessly (rock, screamo and hip hop are all cited influences), failing to justify a seemingly forced leap toward originality. The attempted punk and/or rock aspects are often second-rate, manufactured with poor tonality and playing, tainting potentially cream-of-the-crop material. When the rhymes and vocal melodies go fluid, the music stagnates and vice versa. In conclusion, this record has left my ears and mind in a state of bipolar flux; Mr. Williams has all the right workings, but some mediation is well in order. (BM)

Fader Label, www.thefader.com

Woggles, The – S/T, 7"

Conveniently separated by the "rock" a-side and the "soul" b-side, The Woggles strut their stuff in four energetic jams that sound like what The Commitments would have if they played in dirty juke joints. This sort of thing can often sound contrived, but The Woggles attack with dead-on accuracy. (MS)
Chicken Ranch Records, PO Box 703 Franklin, IL 37065, www.chickenranchrecords.com

Wooden Ghost – Ask The Dust, CD

A collection of the band's instrumental improvisational work from 1999 to 2002, *Ask The Dust* is 13 tracks of harmonic splendor. The band's sound is rich and full, with subtle electronic touches. A very enjoyable offering. (JG)
Tuolumne Records, PO Box 320-340, Brooklyn, NY 11232, www.tuolumnerecords.com

Wooden Ghost – Looking Back Without Turning Back, CD

I found no redeeming qualities in this recording. It's extremely slow and stagnant, lyrically unimpressive and out of tune, and it sounds like it was recorded in an empty sewer tunnel. The lowest point of the album is track eight, where the same note is picked incessantly throughout the entire song. (LW)

Tuolumne Records, PO Box 320-340, Brooklyn, NY 11232, www.tuolumnerecords.com

Wooden Ghost – Wooden Dubs I, CDEP

Here's a whole set of bass-heavy dubs: "Green Dub," "Dub Of Understanding" and "Make Peace Dub." These are some laid-back and jovial pieces toying with reggae minimalism. Perhaps if I had some weed... (BA)
Tuolumne Records, PO Box 320-340, Brooklyn, NY 11232, www.tuolumnerecords.com

Wooden Ghost – Wooden Dubs II, CD

I am not a dub music expert, but it's similar to reggae with some reverb? There are a lot of drums and organ, but also some saxophone and flute to accompany the guitar feedback. It's definitely a nice change of pace from your regular alternative radio choices. (DI)
Tuolumne Records, PO Box 320-340, Brooklyn, NY 11232, www.tuolumnerecords.com

Witch Hunt – ...As Priorities Decay, CD

These guys played down the street from me recently, and after hearing this album, I feel like an idiot for skipping the show. This is

a lot more straight-up hardcore than I would expect from Profane Existence. It has an anarcho edge that reminds me of Crucifix. I'm having a hard putting the greatness of this album into words. It's really rare that a band writes a hardcore record that's this good musically and lyrically. (DA)

Profane Existence, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408 www.profaneexistence.com

Wrong Brothers, The – Out Of The Car Longhair, CD

Totally lo-fi rock that sounds like it was recorded in someone's bedroom. So lo-fi, in fact, that it's painful. This CD sounds like it was recorded while they were drunk and bored on a Friday night, but I'll give them points for actually doing it. (DH)

Bad Bunny, 52 Strickland Lane, Ardmore, TN 38449, volcanovulture@yahoo.com

XYZR_KX – Falls Off The Curb, Chump Style, CD

Trippy, poppy, emotional songs with loops, beats and noises over gentle singing and guitars. Some songs head into experimental territory, with sparse instrumentation. Other songs sound a little like shoegazer indie rock with soft vocals, jangly guitars and an electronic hum in the background. Some songs even sound like techno. Strictly for chillin'. (NS)

Actually, 1307 W. Hollywood Ave. 2W, Chicago, IL 60660, www.actuallyrecords.com

Y.A.C.H.T. – Super Warren MMIV, CD

Y.A.C.H.T. is essentially Jona Bechtolt, a laptop musician from Portland. Elements recall some of the better keyboard sounds generated by the Human League, though this is dancier and has some upbeat beats, with a sprinkle of glitch. If you treat everyday life as a video game, consider this for a soundtrack. (BA)

States Rights, 5802 N. Kerby Ave., Portland, OR 97217, www.statesrightsrecords.com

Year Future – The Hidden Hand, CDEP

A three-song EP from this Los Angeles band that attacks prescription-drug dependency, American global ignorance and capitalist media domination. The energy is authentic, and Sonny Kay's screaming vocals are the highlight of this propulsive rock outfit. They have somewhat of a Bauhaus sound, but harsher. (BA)

GSJ, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Yellow Swans, The – Bring The Neon War Home, CD

The sound of a guitarist going to war with his laptop, The Yellow Swans fall somewhere between Matmos and Ministry. The Bay-area duo teeters on the edge of listenability, as *Bring The Neon War Home* is carefully constructed chaos, the sort of electronic experimentation sometimes better left in college dorms. (TM)

Narnack, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor, Suite 3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

Yesterdays Rising – When We Speak, We Breathe, CDEP

Here is some extremely hooky and melodic "emo-core" complete with powerful metal breakdowns. Eloquent, intense, brutal, sad—basically, it's your typical emotional hard rock. (MG)

Fearless, 13772 Golden West St., #545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

Youngs, The – S/T, CD

The Youngs are beautifully bizarre. The duo's spaced out, psychedelic pop whirls inside twisting layers of stellar guitar lines and unpredictable rhythms, but is grounded in the lush melodies and the warm vocals of Timothy and, especially, Erin Young, whose tender voice serves as the guide into their cosmic world. (CC)

Mimicry Recordings, www.webofmimicry.com

Your Team Ring – In Service Of The Villain, CD

This is an epic record of lovely, calming, melancholy, orchestral pop and indie and folk tracks. A multi-instrumental swirl of truly great songs. If you're somewhat enchanted by bands like The Polyphonic Spree, but find them to be a little "too much," give this a try. (MG)

Perhaps Transparent Recordings, 128 Hutton St., Jersey City, NJ 07307-3014, www.perhapstransparent.com

Youth Class, The – This Is What I Remember, CD

The Youth Class are a cool indie rock band that sing about things like girls they can't talk to and childhood. It's actually an enjoyable listen

when you're in a self-deprecating mood. There's an untitled instrumental that gets fairly experimental as well. (SJ)

Self-released, 2408 N. Institute Pl, Peoria, IL 61604-3278, www.theyouthclass.com

Zao – The Funeral Of God, CD

I really want to like this record—really, I do. For an openly Christian band to release a concept album regarding the idea of God giving up on society and choosing to die is a ballsy move, I think. While the idea of Christian hardcore or (even worse) Christian metal doesn't sit well with me personally, this record has a lot of really well-executed parts. Even with the brutal-in-a-bad-way singing, I still wanted to read the lyrics and see what the next song would bring. To be honest, I think that if there were no singing at all (like on "The Rising End"), I would wholeheartedly endorse this record. What I do endorse, though, is the fact that Zao actually seem to question their own belief system and strive to better themselves as people through the process of asking questions. While most Christian bands seem to blindly endorse the God they obviously haven't read up on and pray to him like he's some sort of wish-granter, Zao have taken a chance, and I admire that. At the end of the day, it's still above-average metal hardcore, but at least they put some actual thought into it. (DH)

Ferret Music, #409, 167 Wayne St., Jersey City, NJ 07302, www.ferretstyle.com

Zatkov – S/T, CDEP

This is all over the metalcore map. There is a lot of slow chug, big growly vocals and octave chords. As standard issue as that sounds, it's not nearly the snooze-fest the average metalcore record is. (RR)

Codebreaker Records, PO Box 35, Settle BD24 9WW, UK, www.thecodebreaker.net

V/A – Austin Punk Rock, Vol. 2, CD

If anything, this is a sign that pop-punk/nü-emo is huge in Austin. Twenty-six tracks of strained crooning and anthemic pop-punk breakdowns destined to make your angst teenage heart melt while you brood in your dorm room. Includes an extra CD of super-stimulating "multimedia," too. (VC)

Austin Punk Rock, PO Box 27037, Austin, TX 78731, www.austinpunkrock.org

V/A – Compilation, CD

This interesting compilation is composed of an eclectic mix of punk styles ranging from new wave to garage to dance. The bands are all either from Channel Island or the UK, and there are some real weird ones in the mix, such as The Meatballs and Sexton Ming. (AE)

Bareknuckle Records, www.bareknucklerecords.com

V/A – Broken Lamps And Hardcore Memories Vol. Two, CD

This is 26 tracks of Alternative Press-style neo-hardcore by the like of Atreyu and A Wilhelm Scream. Standout tracks come from Since By Man with their metallic sound and Taken with their intriguing guitars, the latter from a demo no less. (SJ)

Paste Punk, www.pastepunk.com

V/A – Future Soundtrack For America, CD

As I sit here and write this review, the presidential election is escalating to a near fever pitch. 2004's race promises to be one of the most important elections in decades, and the anticipation continues to build. Two of this year's most important 527's have joined up with Barsuk to produce a record that not only shines in its mission, but with its music as well. OKGo's stunning rendition of The Zombies' "This Will Be Our Year" aptly opens the record, with David Byrne's moving "Ain't Got So Far To Go" following right behind it. Other highlights include Jimmy Eat World's pumped up cover of Guided By Voices' "Game Of Pricks" and Tom Waits' sobering "Day After Tomorrow." For a compilation, *Future Soundtrack..* retains a remarkable flow, despite a few out-right clunkers. (You'd be smart to gloss over Ben Kweller's misguided "Jerry Falwell Destroyed Earth.") It's scary to think that by the time this review is published, America will have already decided her victor. Until then, I'll hope that our actual future can live up to the promise of its newfound soundtrack. (MS)

Barsuk Records, PO Box 22546 Seattle, WA 98122, www.barsuk.com

V/A – Hopelessly Devoted To You Vol. 5, CD

The fifth in the Hopeless Records sampler series offers up unreleased tracks from Thrive, Break The Silence, Common Rider, Melee, Stairwell, Amber Pacific and Avenged Sevenfold. You decide whether that's worth your pocket change. (BN)

Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409-7495, www.hopelessrecords.com

V/A – Million Tongues Festival, CD

Twenty songs different by 20 bands without any discernable connection to each other—except weirdness, live songs, some Japanese bands and a lot of college students with too much free time. That and they all played the same Chicago music festival. (DI)

Bastard Records, www.arthurnag.com

V/A – Not In Captivity, CD

The cheery handclaps of Saving Face's "Two Steps" midway through this 22-track compilation stick out for not only because they're catchy, but for providing some balance to this mostly hardcore compilation. Other acts include the '77-influenced the Broke, the Slayer-leaning Already Dead and the wonderfully named Stalin's War, which owns the comp's most memorable riff. (TM)

High Fidelity, PO Box 1071, Grover Beach, CA 93483 www.highfidelityrecords.com

V/A – Punk Rock Is Your Friend, CD

Twenty-nine tracks, six of which are previously unreleased, and five videos for under 4 bucks. It features, Tsunami Bomb, The Vandals, No Use For A Name, The Ataris and more. What else do you need to know? (BN)

Kung Fu Records, PO Box 38009, Hollywood, CA 90038, www.kungfurecords.com

V/A – This Is Indie Rock, Volume 1, CD

Now that the *Emo Diaries* have come to a close, Deep Elm has decided to dish up another compilation series, this time with indie rock as the genre of choice. The bad thing is it's a pretty broad range to cover, and the compilation is exemplary of that. Under the umbrella of "indie rock," it includes everything from the bluesy singer/songwriter Joanna Erdos to the spastic post-punkers Dino Velvet. As well, there are a lot of songs on this comp that sound a bit out of place—like they should have been on the previous Deep Elm installations (*Siva*, *The Kidcrash*). Few are the more traditional indie rock bands, including Leaving Rouge and The Blind King, bands that contribute two of the more noteworthy tracks on this comp. (AJA)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelem.com

V/A – We Ain't Housewife Material, CD

This is a terrible collection of utterly predictable punk-by-numbers songs by 20 female punk bands. However, like almost all bloated compilations, there is at least one diamond in the rough. That nod goes to Flowermule, who do a fucking rocking version of The Spiders' "Upside Down." (It sounds like the band broke into STAX, stole the MG's equipment and let Hazel Adkins do all the recording and mixing.) That lone gem aside, this is a comp you'll wanna avoid. (RL)

Dionysus Records, PO Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507, www.dionysusrecords.com

V/A – Welcome To Circus Punk-A-Billy, CD

Oh, punkabilly, that bastard of subgenres. With so many similar-sounding bands—raw, gruff punk vocals, standup bass clack, buzzsaw guitars—it's the slightly different bands that really stand out. On this multicountry comp, it's the French bands in particular that have managed to carve out a unique sound. (RR)

Wolverine Records, Kaiserwerther Str. 166, 40474 Düsseldorf, Germany, www.wolverine-records.de

V/A – What We Built: A Swedish Hardcore Compilation, CD

As the name implies, this is a hardcore comp from Sweden that concentrates on straightedge bands. There's some good stuff here if you like the old-school sound. The album also comes with a zine featuring interviews with the bands on the comp. (SJ)

Dead Eyed Records, Kinnekulle, 41A, 167 43 Bromma, Sweden, www.deadeyedrecords.com

Send us your reviewables! Mail to: Punk Planet 4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613.



books

Edited by Joe Meno

ALL HANDS ON an interview with Todd Dills

Like placing your ear beside some kind of magical, future radio and listening to the shocking world of the strange and new, *the 2nd Hand*, a literary magazine offered free of charge around the country, presents some of the starkest, most original, most challenging, and oddest bits of stories you might ever hope to find. The broadsheet, one large single sheet of paper, published by editor Todd Dills in Chicago and distributed internationally, has featured visionary work by Mickey Hess, Paul Toth, and editor Dills himself. *All Hands On*, an anthology of new work and old, features the best of the magazine's five years and a look at what may stand as the underground lit world's most interesting contemporary writing.

After touring with Todd three times across the US and Canada, I had a few questions I was hoping he'd answer about the magazine and the new anthology.

OK, to start off, what's the name of the magazine supposed to signify?

The 2nd Hand was initially attractive as a name because it pointed to some sort of underdog status. Like say the first hand's God or the lit establishment, and *the 2nd Hand* then is the devious angel agent who disagrees mightily with his or her boss or the writer who the big magazines won't publish because his or her stuff's too adventurous or naughty. Conversely *the 2nd Hand*, as a title, likewise played to the format, the single sheet of paper easily passed off to friends when done, free and easy to access or discard, like cheap second-hand paperbacks or clothes, the exact opposite of overpriced, perfect-bound lit journals.

How does music influence the magazine and your own writing?

The magazine is a direct outgrowth of my being in bands growing up. When I moved to Chicago from South Carolina in 1998 my band days were over, but I was writing, and a host of folks around me were writing, too. A lot of us were from the same cut: whether we were artists or writers who had been in bands we were all relatively comfortable forcing the issue of getting our stuff out there. ¶ In my own work, I'm interested in musical forms—the album, for instance—as structural models. One thing I've done—as ludicrous as it sounds—is “cover” entire albums in prose form, particularly Metallica's *Master of Puppets* and which appears in the book as, simply, “My Master of Puppets.” It's structured like the album, Track 1, Track 2, and in each “track” I attempt to write basically the feel of the piece, which ends up being strange and funny.

Tell me about *All Hands On*—what are some of your favorite moments in the collection?

All Hands On is basically a best-of the magazine, with new features from frequent contributors, organized in five sections: everything from music-influenced prose to “Itineraries,” which are basically day-in-the-life narratives, minute by minute. The final section, “The Tryouts” is where you'll find the crazy weird stuff, and some of my favorites: Mickey Hess, a hip-hop aficionado, has a piece where he adopts a “sampling” technique, writing a narrative from samples from, respectively, Naomi Wolf's *Promiscuities*, Knut Hamsun's 1920 Nobel prize acceptance speech, and Ol' Dirty Bastard's impromptu speech at the 1998 Grammy's. It's amazing, and amazingly hilarious.

Why do you continue to publish *the 2nd Hand*?

I do it because I love it, for one. There's nothing like getting a new issue out with these great stories by these wonderful people. This has been and continues to be the driving force, on a very basic level. I think that coming out of the punk or rock scene, and the conceivably underdog South, I still feel

that way. When I read the fiction in the *New Yorker* or *Harper's* or whatever, I forget about it in two seconds. Lately I just hope that we're doing something to remember something that's a bright blip in an oftentimes disgusting, violent, deceitful, bankrupt world.

As part of the life of the magazine and book, you've toured around the US and Canada pretty often. What's been memorable from that?

The worst thing I've ever had happen to me on tour was on the one occasion I had the gall to pass into my native South Carolina—the only time I've ever been there on tour—with two Canadians. I was wearing a pair of beaten-up leather pants, and I ended up in jail. It sucked sitting in jail; it was the day the big anthrax scare was going down and I was in this waiting area all day with dudes turning themselves in for parole violations waiting to go back to their cells, and periodically a sanctimonious Dan Rather would interrupt the jailhouse patter with his doomsday reporting. Absolutely surreal. ¶ I really get into touring because it broadens your perspective both on what's going on in the world—or the nation, or your region—and on your own work. If you're going to operate outside of the established routes in getting your work out there, if you're going to attempt to change the culture, you've gotta operate at least part of the time on a scale that's outside of your immediate surroundings, I think. By doing it, you're influencing a host of others who see you doing it and begin to see the idea in relation to themselves. That's important. My friend Jim Munroe, a Canadian writer, calls it “philosophical anarchism.” For me it was Fugazi, seeing them play, knowing their philosophy, their history. For some kid out there in Cincinnati or wherever who likes to write, to create, who knows, maybe, it's you. —Joe Meno

To pick up *All Hands On*, go to www.the2ndhand.com.

The Motorcycle Diaries

Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Ocean Press

In the time it took me to read this book I encountered many different images of Ernesto "Che" Guevara around the city of Chicago. A friend had a poster in his apartment, I spotted patches on people's backpacks, saw his silhouette decaled on the T-shirts of teenagers riding my bus, and this doesn't even take into account the trailers for the film based on this very book that were all over television. I couldn't help but wonder how much of his history the people propagating his legend even knew about the man. I don't have a doctorate in Latin American history, but I have studied it enough to know that there is more than one school of thought on this individual. While he represents freedom to some, he represents oppression and the creation of an unjust social system to others. But I tried to put what I knew and didn't know aside while reading this book and focus on the story of this particular journey, because it is a fascinating one.

A young Guevara and his friend Alberto Granado travel South America on what is more a motor-bike than a motorcycle, discovering themselves and exploring a continent along the way. The narrative is relayed through Guevara's own writing in diary and letter form; a style that makes the events feel recorded as-they-happen and allows for almost instant reflection on them after they occur. The book definitely deepened my knowledge of this individual whose face you see everywhere. But don't get me wrong—I don't have any deeper knowledge about how or why he became one of the most talked-about political figures of the 20th century, I only have a more layered and textured image of him as a young man. It reads fast, keeps you interested, and at times does hint at the development of the revolutionary he will one day become, like his time spent at Machu Picchu where he praises the Inca city and discusses its strategic military strengths. And so while I have to believe that reading this book will give the 16-year-old on my bus a good read and a deeper knowledge of the man whose photo adorns his T-shirt, I doubt he will have a much deeper knowledge of the reasons that T-shirt exists. —Robert Biedrzycki

Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life

Bryan Lee O'Malley

Oni Press

I'm probably more familiar with Scott Pilgrim's conflict in this graphic novel than I care to admit. Pilgrim is a 23-year-old bassist dating a cute Asian high school girl; a situation which becomes even more complicated when a hip rollerbladin'

delivery girl named Ramona glides into his life. The everyday drama facing this Canadian pseudo-musician is somewhat reassuring and often quite funny, including, but not limited to the lack of money which accompanies his unemployment, explaining relationship choices to his younger sister, explaining relationship choices to his gay roommate, and getting ready for a gig. And then come the seven evil ex-boyfriends. It seems this Ramona has a rather shaky past (it's always the pretty ones isn't it?) and Scott has to confront it right there in the middle of a show. The black and white illustrations are simple when they need to be, detailed when they need to be and include a few nice dream scenes. Even though the evil squadron of ex-boyfriends felt a little tacked on at the end, you have to wonder how Scott's going to deal with them and the girls in Volume II. All in all it's lots of fun, and what's wrong with that? —Jimmy Vickery

924 Gilman: The Story So Far...

Compiled by Brian Edge

Maximum Rock'n'Roll

Seventy-eight contributors describe their experiences of 924 Gilman in Berkeley, the country's oldest all-ages, co-operatively run punk venue/hangout. Brian Edge has put together a history of the club according to the people who started it and the ever-changing volunteers that have kept the place running. The Gilman Street Project was originally funded by *Maximum Rock'n'Roll* magazine and carved (by volunteers) out of a warehouse space in late 1986. The impetus for the club, Martin Sprouse explains in the book, was because *MRR* founder Tim Yohannan "wanted to start a punk-rock clubhouse."

The book is filled with archival photos and documents, newspaper and zine excerpts, and comics. The comprehensive list of Gilman shows and events takes up 29 impressive pages, but the writing sets band gossip aside and instead focuses on the story of the community that witnessed it.

If Edge had condensed these essays and interviews, the book would have been way shorter, and less repetitious, but it would have lost a lot of its character. The contributors breathe some dimension into the place, the times, the successes and the failures. The drama that has faced the club over the years—financial troubles, volunteer burnout, nazi thugs, zoning commissions, theft, grime, cliques, and apathy—is clearly documented and you find yourself rooting for the club to overcome the obstacles like it's a character. In fact, with so many people coming and going it's the place itself

that does the overcoming. The book's hero is a place and the ethic behind it.

Even the contributors with a negative take on the club say that, at least for a while, Gilman gave them a safe and supportive community that they hadn't found anywhere else. *The Story So Far* isn't about your asshole neighbor's bat-wielding version of punk rock, and it's not your little sister's mall-core, either. I nominate it as a future textbook, full of promise and warning, for any "DIY or die" (contributor Marcus Da Anarchist's phrase) establishment.

—Meredith Grahil

Crude: The Story of Oil

Sonia Shah

Consortium

As a kid, I remember being in the car on a road trip with my father, staring out of the window at the dull Midwestern landscape, and pointing to a field scattered with half a dozen giant, hammer-like machines that seemed to be smashing their pointed heads into the soil.

"What are those?" I asked.

"They're for getting oil out of the ground," my father answered. And then I remember thinking, *so that's how they do it*. But it wasn't until much later that I realized these machines were miniscule compared to the monstrous steel inventions built and monitored by aggressively capitalistic oil companies all over the world.

In her account of our love affair with oil, Sonia Shah endeavors to show us just this—there's more to the business of extracting our precious fuel than what we see driving along rural back roads. Shah's *Crude: The Story of Oil* relates to its readers oil's extensive and somewhat veiled history—from its first formations in nature to the billion dollar, world-dominating industry we know today.

Shah's book reads like a textbook at first, in that it assumes you know nothing about the subject, (which, for the most part, I didn't) and then, about a third of the way through, morphs into what comes off as a compilation of newspaper articles (the author is, after all, a journalist). The writing is as objective and straightforward as anything of a journalistic nature can be, but at times borders on dry. It is full of facts and figures; so while less engaging than agenda-driven books intended solely to generate outrage, it remains respectful of discerning readers. Shah seems to want us to know the unabridged facts and available alternatives, and then to draw our own, better informed, conclusions. —Emily Schambra

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comics

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Daphne Adair (DA), Chris Burkhalter (CB), Dave Elfving (DE), Janelle Hessig (JH). Edited by Anne Elizabeth Moore (AEM).

Demo #1 and 2

Star Trek: The Next Generation is far cooler than *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. As the latter is set on a space station, it necessitates an ongoing story arc. Each episode depends, in large part, on the last. *Next Generation*, however, can venture wherever the starship Enterprise takes it. An encounter with an interstellar time warp one week, a visit from the Borg the next. It's a far more flexible platform for the delivery of geeky science fiction. Series of comic books generally follow the *Deep Space Nine* model. To truly enjoy an issue, you've got to know what happened previously. With superhero books, this can mean catching up with decades of material. With *Demo*, Wood and Cloonan dump this notion and let each book stand on its own. While the same general themes run throughout each installment, they are complete works in themselves. The books are individual haikus, albeit of a mutated and super-powered variety. (DE)

\$2.95 by Brian Wood and Becky Cloonan, AIT/Planet Lar, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116

Duck Lessons

Stefan Gruber's charming—even brilliant—new mini affects the same rudimentary pencils he used in 2003's *Kometes*, trading in the precise designs of his Cocteau-esque multimedia fairytales for a carefully-arrived-at simplicity better suited to this minimalist format. Each of the fifteen pages is broken into nine panels uniform in size and layout (think *Life in Hell*). Each page could easily stand alone, but here connect in an extended dialogue between a male human and the mute duck he's accepted as mentor. From this duck our main character seeks life lessons, spiritual guidance, exclusive companionship, and book recommendations. Can we blame the duck's silence on an inability to speak (scoff!)? Or is this part of its Zen-like counsel? Either way, the awkward pauses are interpreted as sage advice. "Speaking from a duck perspective, would you say humans have left enough of the world for ducks to live comfortably?

Because ... you can stay at my place." At \$3.00, can you seriously afford not to buy this??? CB

\$3.00, Stefan Gruber, self-published, stefangruber.com

Ouija Interviews #1: Theo Wallis and #2: Chip

Sarah Becan's *Ouija Interview* series (no. 1: Theo Wallis; no. 2: Chip) is one of those clever little art books that shouldn't really be a comic book on one hand, but on the other, couldn't be anything but. Framed as interviews between the unseen narrator and the ghostly subjects, Sarah's Theo and Chip respond to questions about death and the afterlife, cracking jokes when they get bored and, it seems, making up answers to mere mortals' queries when they don't know the real answers. Cleverly drawn and conceived with muted color covers, these minis are highly recommended. (AEM)

\$5, self-published, Sarah Becan, www.jakze.com

Pussy Comics: Mic Check, Chasing Tail, Living in a Post-Title IX World, Pussy's Big Day, Gender as Performance

There's a joke in my house that originated in a modern dance troupe's self-explanation: "There's nothing to get." For three years now, we've tossed the line at furniture catalogs, political candidates and several types of modern art: there's nothing to get excuses us from feeling stupid, or excuses the creator from the obligation to communicate clearly. But the human mind always wants something to get—modern dance pieces have titles, after all, and so do Pussy Comics.

In *Mic Check*, Pussy has to use her ingenuity to corral a microphone before she's pulled offstage for lack of performance—such a simple task if you're not house-cat-sized, which our hero(ine) is. The front cover, which shows an alternate use of the mic, clues us in on what we're getting, here. This is a cynical view of gender roles in a world still dominated by a male perspective, leavened by the simple comic form and open to interpretation thanks to the absence of verbal narration.

We witness a strange identity game involving mari-onettes and all manner of sock puppets in *Gender as Performance*, and a deflating, effective punchline in *Living in a*

Post-Title IX World. My least favorite, *Pussy's Big Day*, is also the shortest, and appears to be computer-illustrated, which throws into suspicion my admiration for the heavy draping lines and expectant rows of empty seats in *Mic Check*.

The longest selection here, *Chasing Tail*, looks most obvious at first glance—there's an actual, if non-verbal, narrative—but in spite of having the most obvious sexual/political implications, including patently male animal control agents (can anyone tell me what "C.D.E." stands for? Is this a secret code like "Dred Scott"?), who violently remove kitty's internal reproductive organs and replace her belly with a washing machine door, creating a literal breeding ground for rats. . . . Just as I start to get the metaphor, it stops making sense. In the end, *Chasing Tail* is the most confounding, but maybe that makes it the most interesting to talk about. I can't help thinking there's something to get, and I want to know what it is that other people get, too. (DA)

by Kat Hartman, self-published, request pricing information at katcomics13@yahoo.com

Raisin Pie #3

Raisin Pie is an anthology compiling the work of a husband and wife duo. Altergott's comics seem a genre work-out, injecting precisely realized Americana-meets-pulp comic style (in longer stories, but especially in the half-page pieces) with what I can only describe as adolescent sexuality kitsch. ("Are those CONDOMS? GOSH! Do you think I'll be NEEDING them?") There are great things to be yielded from the stuff of genre, but this seems to most fully embrace, perhaps deliberately, the mediocrity typified by it. Bordeaux's work is a more standard indie fare, to the point that it could be labeled a sort of exercise in genre as well. I wasn't into her half-page strips. Her ongoing stories did nothing remarkable, but I must say I look forward to seeing them continued, which I guess is a compliment. (CB)

\$3.50, by Ariel Bordeaux and Rick Altergott, Fantagraphics Books, www.fantagraphics.com

She Loves Me She Loves Me Not #8: Cassavetes' Secret

Folding and cutting a single sheet of paper, Johnny Broken fashions six-page mini-comics sized around four inches tall. This doesn't leave much space for plot development, but Mr.



Broken needs little for his sceneric mock-tragedies. *SLMSLMN* concerns one sad little soft boy whose fragile heart is routinely smashed by a succession of generic cute girls, apparently because they listen to unsigned bands and have good haircuts. Maybe tattoos, I dunno. Definitely clever stuff, though ultimately little more than amusing trifles (a limitation of the medium, I guess). The newest installment, set in a video store, overextends itself slightly, adding retail job disillusionment to the plotline and soaking the pages with text, where earlier issues made due with as few as 18 words. I prefer the more focused, rarefied, and stripped-down installments — #s 5 and 6 in particular. But I'm nitpicking; Cassavete's *Secret* is two minutes very well spent. (CB)

SL, by Johnny Broken, johnnybroken@hotmail.com or 8 B Johnson Street, Burlington VT 05401

Scheherazade

"Scheherazade" isn't a name that rolls off the tongue easily. However, it might be appropriate that the title is a mouthful, as these artists have a lot to say in the first all-women anthology to come down the pike in a long, long time. In her introduction, Megan Kelso discusses the purpose of compiling an anthology of female comic artists in an age where the existence of high-caliber female cartoonists has already been established (it behooves me at this point to give a shout-out to the likes of Diane Noomin and Trina Robbins): Now that the burden of proof has been lifted, women artists are free to concentrate on their craft, as exemplified in this collection.

There is a wide variation of storytelling styles to be found here, and topics run the gamut from arctic expeditions to peeping toms. If forced to choose, I would name Lauren Weinstein's narrative as my favorite this time around. In order to find her AWOL beau, Weinstein's heroine pieces together clues from an eventful evening, eventually finding her man shoeless and tripping on acid in the campus security office.

Across the board, *Scheherazade* is tight. The majority of the artists are art-school grads, and it shows. I was afraid that this anthology might wind up being a little too tight, in fact — that they would lose the fire and the hilarity and, let's face it, crudeness that made previous anthologies (like *Twisted Sisters*) so fantastic. However, as soon as I came across Ariel Schrag's comic about carrying around a turd in her backpack, my fears were laid to rest.

In the dating world, you would refer to this collection as "a total package." There are old favorites here, such as Gabby Gamboa, Ariel Bordeaux, and Kelso, as well as new favorites such as Gabrielle Bell, Allison Cole, and Sara Varon. This is bound to become a classic, so pick up a copy today or be kicking yourself all the way to eBay tomorrow. (JH)

\$19.95, Megan Kelso, Ed., Soft Skull Press, ISBN #: 1-932360-54-9

Street Angel #1 - 3

A scrawny, eighth grade skater grrrl with unstoppable kung-fu kills everything. She does it again in issue two, and once more in issue three. It starts to get a bit old. But the book remains interesting by virtue of a neighborhood is infested with evil Ninjas. They are a modern incarnation of the nameless, bumbling thugs of Adam West's *Batman*. Though not their intention (if it was, I bow before their genius) the Ninjas are the book.

Indeed, they've got their own comic strip inside the back cover of each issue. In "Ninja Dojo" a black clad assassin, complete with sword, guides the reader through the process of baking cookies and demonstrates the basic fingerpicking rolls of Kentucky bluegrass banjo. Brilliant. (DE)

\$2.95, by Jimm Rugg and Brian Maruca, SLG Publishing, P.O. Box 26427, San Jose, CA 95159 or siavelabor.com

Video #1 and 2

So Jesus has returned, having announced himself through that most revered of institutions, television. Heavy stuff for

a comic book. While Buell is not the first writer to grapple with the theological, he offers a clever twist on the tradition. Rather than embracing the second coming, Buell's antisocial heroes want to go underground in an effort to escape from the omniscient. The futility and inherent contradiction of this endeavor doesn't enter into their heads. Which is just as well, as their plan suffers something of a setback in issue two — a book that can be read as reverential or blasphemous depending on your leanings.

Buell is off to an interesting start with *Video*. If he can walk the line between engaging drama and heavy-handed Sunday school teachings, it should prove an entertaining series. (DE)

By Stephen R. Buell, *Lost in the Dark Press*, 17517 Tulsa St., Granada Hills, CA. 91344 or www.lostinthedark.com

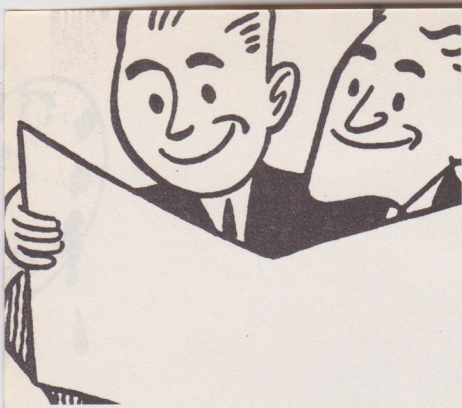
Wolverine: Dying Time

Although you can't buy it anywhere, probably because selling it would quickly and easily throttle the life from Jeffrey Brown's career at the hands of copyright-protective Marvel, the BW mini *Wolverine: Dying Time* is such a great mix of different kinds of pathoses that it really deserves commentary. (Plus, we state right at the bottom of the page that we don't care whether or not you buy the comics we read; it's a small step therefore to not caring if they're even available for sale.) Wolverine, already a symbol of aging pathos in the rife-with-angst-X-Men clan, here gets a dose of Brown's particular kind of self-loathing. The result is a pitiable killing machine capable of fucking up his life with superhuman ability, and a little book that exemplifies both why underground, alternative, and independent comics are still influenced by the supes, and why this is actually a good thing. AEM

Not available for sale, by Jeffrey Brown, self-published, www.theholysconsumption.com

Send your comics to: Punk Planet attn: Comics! 4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613.

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We review independently produced comics. It's true. We do it for the love of reading them, and for the love of writing about them. We don't care whether or not you buy them based on our reviews, but we will make every effort to give you what information we can about the comics we review that are available for sale. We review comics that are put out by the small publishing houses, comics that are put out by small art collectives, and comics that are put out by individuals. We'll try to review every comic we get in-house, but sometimes, that's just not possible. Sorry.



zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: **Abbie Amadio (AJA)**, **Amy Adoyzie (AA)**, **Joe Biel (JB)**, **Ari Charney (AC)**, **Vincent Chung (VC)**, **Lisa Groshong (LG)**, **Dan Laidman (DAL)**, **Brian Moss (BM)**, **Claire Sewell (CS)**.

Arthur #12

Fresh off the presses is another tip-top issue of *Arthur*. Literary intellectuals and casual readers alike should be able to find solace in the newspaper's eclectic collection of delving features and amusing briefs. Johnny Cash's ties to prison, Jennifer Herrema and eccentric comic artist Grant Morrison are all covered. (BM)

Free, www.arthurmag.com

Band Aid Cancer #2

So much to say, but not quite sure how to put it. This zine is made up of the ramblings of a disillusioned movie-goer, a film buff who goes on to describe the differences between mainstream movies as being "entertaining" and the indie film as "art." Not all that exciting of an epiphany. Although his interest is completely genuine, it doesn't add to his discussion of the subject when he generalizes about movies he hasn't seen (though he does admit this outright). He should probably, and will, I'm sure, keep digging. Anyone who puts *Citizen Kane* on the same "Best Seen This Year List" as the Johnny Depp travesty, *Blow*, needs to do some re-evaluating. (AJA)

\$1 plus stamps or trade, *Stu/Frame of Choice*, 240 E. Kline Ave., Lansford, PA 18232, artcrimnal@riseup.net

Bejeezus #5

It just keeps getting better and better! Women-centered band coverage that maintains the fine line between whimsical and intelligent, each filled with in-depth and candid interviews. This issue features The Rogers Sisters, The Handsome Family, Joanna Newsom and tons more. (VC)

\$3, PO Box 575, Louisville, KY 40201, www.bejeezuszine.com

Blood Money Gazette #1

A professional medical study participant documents his life with such macho gravitas, he thinks he's deep in the trenches. But he's just following orders—and poorly at that. Randall's arrogance derides any invested interest, and, in the end, he's just a cocky brat who whines about everything with maximum condescension. (VC)

\$3, Randall, PO Box 625, New York, NY 10276-0625, bmg_zine@yahoo.com

Bottletree Reader #1

I'll never know how it feels to be an anthropologist and discover a long lost tomb of some forgotten queen in a distant land. I'll never know that specific feeling of discovery, knowing that you will forever alter the landscape of timelines and history textbooks. But I do know how it feels to clutch a new zine, feeling as though I have stumbled upon a tiny treasure among stacks of photocopies. *Bottletree* editor Stephen McClurg's "Apartment Mind" graphic story (i.e. comic) is both soothing and grotesque in its story of an introvert and underpants. "Yuk-Yuks," Derek Ballard's one-page comic, is a demented look into a world where morphine is sold to appease children. Even the poetry by Amethyst Vineyard isn't too bad. My personal favorite is the mini-comic that came along with the zine, "The Varied Faces Of Hillsdale Heights," by Ballard. It's a small ditty featuring muted colors, distorted caricatures and succinct characterizations. It's something else altogether, and as a package it should be applauded. (AA)

\$1, The Alabama Society for Activity vs Inactivity, 5850 Lislav Dr., Mobile, AL 36608, blacksparky2000@yahoo.com

Brisk Walk #1

In his first fanzine, Matt rants intelligently and insightfully about machismo in the punk scene: sexist flyers, mosh-pit kickboxing that chases away female fans, etc. He's too apologetic, but charmingly sweet:

"Sometimes life is cheesy and ... the only way to be really living is to be a huge dork." Amen. (LG)

Trade or postage, Matt Uglyfoot, 5700 N. Tamiami Trail, Box 402, Sarasota, FL 34243-2197

Broken Hipster

A heart-wrenching, intense story of kidney failure and dialysis. Sickness, confusion, and not eating or sleeping turns into a nicely illustrated tale of her problems and ways of dealing with them. A crucial kind of sharing for us to understand our bodies, health problems and community support. (JB)

\$1, Emiko Badillo, 2520 SE 43rd Ave., #B Portland, OR 97206

Chairman Of The Bored #21

Three punks in prison bring us this collection of thoughts, musings and stories. Good depth and perspective into what prison life entails, though it seems to primarily keep the writers sane before any secondary goals. (JB)

\$3/free to prisoners, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Chaos And Fruit Punch #2

This zine follows a diary-like format and covers a variety of topics. Mostly there are the anti-Bush-administration bits, but also album reviews thrown in for good measure (or to make it appear more zine-like). I'll admit this isn't my favorite type of zine, but it's not bad. (CS)

\$2, Operation Phoenix Records, PO Box 13380, Mill Creek, WA 98082

Charged Hair & Distorted Riffs...Bullet Belts & Circle Pits! #2

Jeff has put together a good mix of stuff here. There are scene reports from Vancouver and Squamish (yeah, I'd never heard of it either, but there it is, with a punk scene and everything) as well as Flagstaff, Ariz., and Plan-It-X Fest in Bloomington, Ind. The standout piece is Adi's "My War," about his moving from Yugoslavia to Canada and being saved by a punk-rock mix tape his cousin made for him. The writing styles of all the pieces are better than most other zines like this, and they really give of a good feel for all the different scenes. Lots of fun show photos and a great cut-and-paste layout round out this issue. Recommended. (CS)

\$2 or trade, Jeff, PO Box 21530, 1424 Commercial Dr., Vancouver BC, V5L 5G2

Cinderblock #1

The drug catalogue cover portends the writer's first-person account of Xanax and Klonopin drug cocktails, schizophrenia, psychiatric hospitals and a suicide attempt. Fortunately, she recalibrates her formerly reclusive lifestyle with punk-rock shows and dumpster diving. Bonus points for the saucy, Suicide Girl-style photos on the back cover. (AC)

\$1, stamps or trade, 402 Dousman St., #2, Green Bay, WI 54303

Citizine #6

This mag is making leaps and bounds with coverage of Brian Baker, John Doe (X) and debates about the election. I learned some things and find the writers quite personable. The interviews could stand to be edited down a little bit, though. (JB)

\$4, 2513 W. Fourth St. LA, CA 90057, www.citizinemag.com

Clamor Magazine #28

This issue of the radical-politics mag explores the importance of voting, Dubya's embarrassing track record and the financial background of John Kerry. Non-election coverage includes a bit on Ian Mackeye's The Evens and trafficking being made sexy on TV. I'm not the target audience of this mag and I don't get much out of reading it, but if I lived in a tiny town I know I'd be sucking in every word. (JB)

\$4.50, Clamor PO Box 20128 Toledo, OH 43610, www.clamormagazine.com

Confidential

A simple collection of stories about traveling, dreams and thoughts. Full Gallop style layouts and illustrations accentuate pages that aren't terribly profound, but leave me with some nice things to reflect on for awhile. Most of the thoughts are brief and end abruptly. (JB)

\$2/trade, Meg, PO Box 1529 Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Constellations #13

Constellations features an Elliott Smith eulogy of sorts and a lengthy interview with the frontman of Nada Surf. "Dear Insomnia," this issue's strongest piece, cheerfully confesses that the writer's efforts to overcome the march of "red digital numbers" through chamomile, counting backwards, orgasms, reading and "reading while having orgasms" are continually thwarted. (AC)

No price given, c/o Sierra Sky, PO Box 13078, Long Beach, CA 90803, constellaseven@yahoo.com

Crude Noise #4

With her subcultural social net failing, a worn-out punker becomes jaded with the manifestations of her surroundings while maintaining its ideals. She turns back to her family, retelling an inspiring history of her immigrant ancestors. With great depth, Meredith and Co. create a zine both touching and evocative. (VC)

\$3, Meredith Stern, 6784 Stump Road, Pipersville, PA 18947

Do The Dog Skazine #35

A zine devoted solely to ska in 2004? Dang, whoever said that the third-wave was a fad must be surprised. According to DTDS, there's still a healthy scene in the U.K. and sprinkled across world, as it chronicles every minuscule development within it with scene reports. (AA)

No price. 26a Craven Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5NE, England, dothedog.com

East Village Inky, The #24

I feel a bit sheepish that this was my first encounter with Ayun's well-known zine and, this being the 24th issue, perhaps I should be ashamed of myself for that. But none of that matters because it was certainly a delight to behold. For me, her drawings depicting herself and her family are the best parts. She uses them to tie in the funniest bits of the stories, and it works to nice effect. This issue has a bit of a harried feel to it, and Ayun seems to, at times, be knackered by the business of her life. But she always enjoys herself, making her way around Manhattan with her two kids. Her commentary on her daughter's dance recital, trying to lose weight by following the instructions of the mysterious diet guru, Jorge, and her young son's (ahem) emerging toilet humor are the best. Ayun is still going strong with this zine, and I'm now smitten with it just like everyone else I know who's read it. (CS)

\$2, Ayun Halliday, PO Box 22754, Brooklyn, NY 11202, inky@erols.com

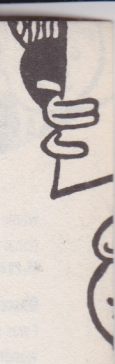
Eaves Of Ass #3

An amusing look into the life and mind of Craven Rock. He dreams about Johnny Cash, rants about things currently annoying (electrocash and Al Burian), writes drunken record reviews (how else?) and participates in a scientific experiment involving alcohol and porn. (AA)

\$2 or trade, PO Box 20692, Seattle, WA 98102, eavesofass@yahoo.com

Fifth Goal, The #8

This truncated issue features darkly photocopied snapshots of graffiti throw-ups sandwiching a lengthy interview with veteran freight-train bomber,



Ghouls. Ghouls traces the lineage between hobo art and New York subway graffiti during one interesting exchange. Ghouls also highlights his mock outlaw lifestyle with his favorite anecdotes about chases and missions. (AC)
No price given, PO Box 970085, Orem, UT 84097

Fran Magazine #2

From the archives of *Fran* comes an oldie that reads like a high school humor rag, with a prison dating guide (you'll need a jar and a sock); a thought-provoking interview with a newly single friend; they also talk with Eric Bachmann of Archers of Loaf fame, currently in Crooked fingers. Good stuff to have handy by the toilet. (AA)
Free, 511 Kenmore Ave., Suite 103, Los Angeles, CA 90004, www.franmagazine.com

Fran Magazine #3

LA zine relating the LA scene (i.e., bar reviews and local-band interviews). I especially liked the "An Ex'cuse to Mingle" section, where the recently dumped (or dumpers) get to dish the dirt on their exes and look for new love in the process. Also funny was the sophomoric "Somali Wild Ass" feature—taking double entendre to new lows. (AJA)
Free, 511 N. Kenmore Ave., Suite 103, Los Angeles, CA 90004, www.franmagazine.com

Fran Magazine #22

Fran Magazine is 60 newsprint pages of inside jokes and insight-less interviews that, like tropical fruits and potentially invasive species, should probably not be transported outside the state. Despite a few funny moments, like a piece on how to dress like an old man, my overall reaction is "Why?" (LG)
\$2, 511 North Kenmore Ave., Suite 103, Los Angeles, CA 90004, www.franmagazine.com

Girls Are Not Chicks

Humor has a wonderfully kind way of smoothing out the abrasiveness of righteous self-importance. The intertwining of lightheartedness and dire seriousness is an artistic method that I personally could use a l'il more of. Jacinta Bunnell and Julie Novak have bound up a fantastic children's style coloring book full of classical outlines and witty quotes that promote the systematic breakdown of social and literal gender roles while encouraging women/girls to actively and continuously pursue free thinking and equality. Both adults and children alike should be able to find valuable lessons and smiles within the book's Crayola-crushed pages. (BM)
no price given, *Girls Are Not Chicks*, Jacinta Bunnell and Julie Novak, PO Box 12472, Rosedale, NY 12472, girlsarenotchicks@facehugger.com

Green Anarchy #17

Green Anarchy spends much of this issue delving into political theory with dense, leaden pseudo-academic babble. We're fairly certain that most everyone, excepting true believers and the bored prison beneficiaries of free subscriptions, will find the inscrutable writing off-putting. That said, this is a slickly produced and impressive-looking magazine with reams of content. When the editors call for the downfall of civilization, we believe that they'll brave endless hickory shampoos to make it happen. The magazine also offers an extensive series of news clippings detailing mostly violent resistance from around the world and helpfully categorizing each action under prisoner uprisings, animal liberation, indigenous unrest, etc. The main interview spotlights anti-civilization polemicist Derrick Jensen. We may disagree with Jensen's endorsement of

violence, but we have to admire someone passionate enough to state the following without a trace of irony: "My main objective is to bring down civilization." If he ever succeeds, you'll find us cowering in our underground bunkers with a stack of Lunchables and a pile of assault rifles. Unfortunately, this may be *Green Anarchy's* last appearance in this semi-professional incarnation, as the *Green Anarchy Collective* admits that its publishing operation is hemorrhaging money. (AC)
\$4, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, www.greenanarchy.org

Help, My Snowman's Burning #7

The first half is a fun, pop-culture foray into a few TV shows, computer-generated music, candy and the rock stars it accompanies, a letter about how to become rich and successful, an interview with a man who makes movie-window installations, people accidentally killing penguins. The second half is about China. A fun zine that reminds me of American zines from ten years ago. (JB)
\$4.50, PO Box 14562 Kilbirnie, Wellington, New Zealand hmsb@bigfoot.com

Inner Swine Vol. 10 Iss. 3

A zine with a barcode? Blasphemy! But it's still worth reading, especially if you like acerbic, biting humor of the introspective sort. He waxes politics, or rather his apoliticalness and how that qualifies him to become to next commander-in-chief. He flips a literary bird to all "things people expect me to do," like have job ambition (ha) and kids (you know, perpetuate the "American Dream") and "The End of The Inner Swine." (Don't you love it when people undermine your art as a passing phase?) He documents the momentous occasion where a man with the gnarliest Asian mullet ever cuts off 16 years of hair, which amounted to a 26-inch ponytail to donate to a nonprofit organization, Locks of Love, who make wigs for children going through chemotherapy. Not only was this awesome journalism, but also it makes you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, and you can suppress that urge to kill for a few more minutes. Whew, and there's more. It's bursting at the seams with wit and just plain ol' good writing. (AA)
\$2, PO Box 3024, Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.innerswine.com

It's All Gravy #7

Doing a good job covering the south central LA punk scene, this issue is more pulled together than the last: It contains interviews with LA bands Teenage Wasteland and All or Nothing H.C. Also included are area show reviews, CD reviews and a scene report from the Midwest. (AJA)
\$1, Nick G., 312 W. Eighth St., Los Angeles, CA 90014, gravyzine@hotmail.com

Ladies & Gentlemen #1 + 12"

Media consumers (er, junkies?) like you and I can sympathize with the compulsion for good design. A product looks so tasty that one's compelling reason to own it trumps any sort of practical rationalization. Despite being free review booty, when I laid eyes on this, I couldn't help but think: Ooh, mine. Gimme. I haven't seen a DIY zine this well designed since Josh Hooten and Tony Leone's *Commodity*. Its beautiful typography combining Chantry's sensibility, but utilizing Swiss grid-based compositions are refined enough to make any visual geek swoon. The content contains clever interviews with indie rock/hip hop's finest (The Wrens, Guided By Voices, the A-Frames), ranting columns, poetry (by *American Movie's* Mark Borchardt) and non-standard reviews—especially the sec-

tion reviewing good album design. The most telling piece is a journal contribution by poster artist Jay Ryan preceded by his application for employment, which discloses more than any standard interview would. The included 12" features The Hold Steady, Iron & Wine, Mel Gibson and the Pants, Alias, The Wrens and The Deaths.

No price. Erik Westra, 1447 13th Ave. NW, Rochester, MN 55901, www.lagmag.com

Livingproof #2

With strong control of the written word, Andrew articulately writes half-baked epiphanies like that of a 17-year-old milk baby. This is 10 times more idealistic and melodramatic than any late '90s emo record could ever accomplish, yet its shallow cynicism is merely condescending. Includes an interesting Elizabeth Elmore interview. (VC)
\$3, PO Box 14211, Chicago, IL 60614, www.atm4.net

Localist #6

Providing an in-depth look into Little Rock's subculture and related events, issue six features a local music guide and a free compilation disc. In an amazing feat of nature, the music on the included comp (aside from one or two bad apples) is continuously impressive, regardless of genre, which is more than I can say for most respected labels, let alone local scenes. Aside from the band spotlights, Localist boasts a crew of talented writers/journalists who cover everything from scene veterans, to fashion designers, to quilt makers, to tropical adult beverages. The layout and photography are the magazine's only obvious flaws, but we've all got our bad sides, and in this case the positive attributes easily outweigh the negatives. Take cover, the Dirty South is about to explode. (BM)
\$4, 117 Boone St. #4, Little Rock, AR 72205, www.localistonline.com

Modern Arizona #6

Half weirdo comic-collage zine and half weirdo stories about being in love with a clown and bitch slapping another dude. Comes with a mix CD that is half totally unlistenable ambient-techrap shit and half awesomeness with the likes of Blatz, Elvis and The Who. It ain't bad if you like half of things. (AA)
\$1 or trade, PO Box 494, Brewster, NY 10509, unseen@bestweb.net

New York Nights #22

While this cut 'n paste poetry broadsheet is not political based, the remorse from 9/11 and the events afterward echo as an ominous undercurrent to its everyday themes. Instead of shallow political analysis, its simple, humanistic sincerity beautifully reflects the paranoia and fear of our times. (VC)
\$ASE, PO Box 2030, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025, newyorknights@hotmail.com

Northeastern Anarchist, The #9

From military recruitment to dissections of human hierarchy, to historical articles, this has it all. It's a shame that these articulate, well-researched articles fall behind the shadow of sloganeering and agenda-driven politics. This content needs to be seen by a mainstream audience and not limited to the anarchist choir. (VC)
\$4, PO Box 230685, Boston, MA 02123, northeastern_anarchist@yahoo.com

Now I'm In New York #1

A man's story about living in NYC & LA. It's not terribly riveting to read about various manipulation of women and tidbits of his personal life. The

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (◉) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



whole thing strikes me as a little self-important. It's not terribly educational to hear him spin a literary device into cheating on his wife. (JB)
\$3, PO Box 625, New York, NY 10276-0625

Obscene Emission #2

I was strangely intrigued by this, especially when Reb from Fanorama wonders if political correctness will kill punk and the helpful Swedish/English punk glossary. Nevertheless, I'm repelled by a zine whose graphic identity relies so heavily on white-on-black text and photos of dead people and naked women. (LG)

\$3, c/o Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Avenue, Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Off-Line #29

Subtitled "Heartache," a writer shares eight stories about loves lost over time. Hold up. Allow me to get my gag reflex ready. BARRRRRRF. Of course it sounds like a Dag Nasty reunion (an idea best left in the hypothetical phase), but Vincent writes with adept skill, articulate vocabulary and a personable, self-deprecating voice. His writing twists and turns in a series of curveballs, some predictable, some forced and most spot-on hilarious. It's dotted with some unforgivable clichés, though. He uses his romantic exploits to pursue various states of emotional maturity: from the inexperienced blue balls, to the confused fling, to the climactic, crushing dump and the irrational foolishness that follows. Vincent succeeds most when he doesn't unnecessarily drag awkward adolescence past its prime—a common mistake with personal zines. Afterwards, readers are left with the sentiment that the lessons of love are never kind, despite our idealistic perceptions of it, but above all, love is corny and, in our vain pursuit, we all look like total fucking dorks. (VC)

Donations, Claire E. Cocco/Vincent J. Romano, 35 Barker Avenue #46, White Plains, NY 10601

Off-Line #30

An extremely thoughtful and well-made publication with an intricate chronicle of a hike through New York's Appalachian Trail (sprinkled with fitting anecdotes and little factoids); vegan recipes; and a whole mailbag of letters from readers. *Off-Line* is like taking a quiet walk with an old friend. (AA)

Donation, Claire E. Cocco & Vincent J. Romano, 35 Barker Avenue #6, White Plains, NY 10601

Philadelphia Independent Vol. 1, #17

A good dose of news and wiseass quips. Noteworthy nuggets: coverage of the war in Iraq via an anonymous essay from an Army Specialist and a moving photo essay; awesome comics by David Heatley and more; and a how-to on bird watching. Solid issue all around. (AA)

\$2, 1026 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19107, www.philadelphiaindependent.net

Pick Your Poison #4

Nate's 64-page zine about crappy temp jobs is nearly as long and tedious as the brain-numbing workdays and stoner evenings he describes. His crazily prolific output leads me to suspect speed has supplanted pot as his drug of choice. With some serious editing, he could actually become entertaining. (LG)

\$2, Nate Gangelhoff, PO Box 8995, Minneapolis MN 55408, pickyourpoison@beer.com, www.pickyourpoison.net

Post-Post, The #2

At first glance, this publishing arm of the U of MD college radio station offers typical music zine fare such as record reviews and interviews with International Jet Set and Liars, among others. But it truly distinguishes itself from its peers with this issue's running theme of "Top Five Lists of Anything," a motley assemblage of indispensable lists interspersed throughout the issue. "Your Guide to Lesser Known Libations" celebrates the Flaubert, an improbable cocktail mixing whiskey and cream soda. It also manages to link the gold flakes in Goldschlager to an *NY Times* article on aspirational buying. Intrepid Washingtonians will benefit from a *Weird NJ* inspired round-up of Maryland's "freakiest places," which includes an abandoned tuberculosis hospital that supposedly houses a crematorium and underground tunnels. The issue closes with a geeky guide on how to assume cool in numerous contexts. When dining out, it is apparently cool to order the same thing every time without ever consulting the menu prior to ordering it. It is also cool to sleep at least ten

hours a night or brag about going to bed at 7 p.m. This is the first coolness litmus test that we might actually pass. (AC)

Free, 3130 South Campus, Dining Hall, College Park, MD 20740, www.wmucradio.com

Profane Existence #45

Issue 45 is definitely a solid one for *Profane Existence*. It's inspiring to see a zine that covers not just bands (and ones who are willing to talk about pressing issues and not just venue politics, at that), but important, relevant and timely political issues as well. Their focus on prison systems and issues is admirable. (Need some 1-inch buttons? Their sales support prisoner subscriptions of PE). The big feature this issue is a long piece called "Punk Rock vs. Sexism: a primer." Some of its points are very introductory and won't be new to many of its readers, but it's important to continue publishing articles like that. I'm glad PE is taking the initiative because there are definitely still some who could use a refresher course/reminder of the effects of sexism. There are other great pieces, album reviews and columns as well. (Plus it comes with a good comp CD.) Highly recommended stuff. (CS)

\$7, PO Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.profanexistence.com

Rectification Of Errors & Strategies Against Negative Tendencies, The, #1

Jim Hayes' four-page review/critique/rant about DJ Dangermouse's *The Grey Album* and the nature of "free" music/sampling and is odd, mercifully short, and almost coherent in spots. But who the hell is "Robert Planted"? (LG)

Jim Hayes, PO Box 1459, Marietta, GA 30061, jim-hayes@comcast.net, <http://home.comcast.net/~jim-hayes/wsb/index.html>

Round Things Roll #4

Allison's travel zine feels like a comfortable old pair of overalls. *RTR* features simple graphics, tales of hitching across the South and searching for a washboard in New Orleans, with contributions from Greg Harvester, Replay Dave and Aaron Cometbus. Well worth checking out. (LG)

No price given, Allison/Round Things Roll, 204 Miller St., Fayetteville AR 72703

Scenery #18

Scenery is now in its 10th year of publishing, and the cover is an appropriately celebratory three-color, screen-printed abstract scramble. The opening letter from the editor is a bitter summation of the remnants of the early '90s punk revolution, caustically noting that 10 years later, the original participants are content merely to be "grad students and no-profit grant writers" and "web designers and alcoholics." This is a fitting segue to the first and best overall of the issue's dozen comics, "Talking About Other People." Each panel manages to provide a rough character sketch of a different late twentysomething with only a sentence or two complementing its homey, chicken-scratch drawings. The next comic of note, "The Lion Machine" is a fantastically surrealistic (and ultimately sweet) wordless rendering of an onionheaded scientist whose machine hatches a fully clothed lion. The remaining comics vary from the deliberately obscure to absurdist stupidity. The few pieces of writing start out promising enough only to devolve into pretense or stream of consciousness. In the end, we're left wondering if the writers are in earnest or attempting a satire. Nevertheless, the handsome handmade cover and handful of truly outstanding comics definitely merit its purchase. (AC)

\$3, Mike T., PO Box 28226, Providence, RI 02908

Signal To Noise #35

Like experimental music? Then this is for you. The stories on such artists include Ellen Fullman, Rev. Eugene McDaniels and John Butcher among others. The feature this month is "The Artist's Role in Waging Peace" and contains many thoughts by musicians in the scene about using music as a means of direct action. (CS)

\$4.95, PO Box 585, Winooski, VT 05404, www.signaltonoisemagazine.org

Slug And Lettuce #80

It's been a busy year for Chris, and this issue reflects that. A dense and vivid slice of punk, Chris injects her readers with such great music coverage, it's the equivalent of horse tranquilizer. Note: I think From Ashes Rise hit their photo quota for the next ten issues. Fuck. (VC)

60¢, c/o Christine, PO Box 26632, Richmond, VA 23261-6632

Slug Magazine #188

Short and poorly written articles about "up and coming" bands and ads. I have zero interest in anything except the Sebadoh interview and the Trent Call comics. Otherwise the other 29 pages are totally disposable. (JB)

Free, 2225 S. 500 East, Ste. 206, Salt Lake City, UT 84106, www.slugmag.com

Solitary Existence #1

That Travis was able to send the drafts for this zine from the SHU all while maintaining a wry sense of humor is a tribute to prisoners everywhere. This issue is mostly background on his experiences and what it's like at his prison. Good stuff, and I hope there's more soon. (CS)

\$1 or 3 stamps, free to prisoners, Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI, 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Stir Krazy #8

A radical publication exploring non-zero sums, policing protests, Stonehenge resembling a vulva, comics, the psyche of suicide bombers and some reprints. Fun and educational content that is a tier above most zines. (JB)

\$3, PO Box 25148, Rochester, NY 14625

Us Against Them #11

Mark spends much of the zine unsuccessfully trying to convince himself that he's not having a midlife crisis. Surely many readers can empathize with Mark's internal wrestling between a desire to reinvigorate his activist self while finding himself too tired or jaded to take action. (LG)

\$1, Mark, PMB 60, 595 W. Main St., Norwich CT 06360, schollop9000@yahoo.com

Utter Trash #2

Hailing from Cleveland, Utter Trash takes the standard fanzine stance: interviews (local and national), record reviews and the occasional bit of related chatter. While the print clearly isn't doing anything earth-shaking, the writing is pleasantly concise, and the roster of interviewees (Zeke, Guitar Wold, Toby Radloff) is engaging. (BM)

No price given, PO Box 200496, Cleveland, OH 44120, trashmag@uttertrash.net

Why?: Thoughts of a Disparaged Druggie in Love #1

A Batman-obsessed, misanthropic stoner contemplates his relationship tatters and enduring infatuation with his first love. His nutty girlfriend has designated an Alanis Morissette song to represent each of her previous boyfriends, cuts herself during bouts of depression and rhapsodizes about A-1 steak sauce despite being a vegetarian. (AC)

75¢ or trade, Chris Hass, 7011 Brookover, Boise, ID 83709, www.geocities.com/loopholedistro

Why?: Thoughts of a Disparaged Ex-Druggie Unfortunately Still in Love #2

A high school stoner continues his embittered post-mortem on his first love. This time, his angst is punctuated by self-destructive behavior: He submits his chest to a truly depraved carving session during one last liaison with his cutting enthusiast ex. The scarring has faded somewhat, but apparently still reads "MINE." (AC)

\$1 or trade, Chris Hass, 7011 Brookover, Boise, ID 83709, www.geocities.com/loopholedistro

You Idiot #3

Word to the wise: anti-drug programs in this country are silly and pointless. That's what this zine aims to point out through essays about anti-drug websites and comic books. There's also a crazy piece on drunken robberies. The satire could be more finely tuned, but it was funny in parts. (CS)

\$2, Nate Gangelhoff, PO Box 8995, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.pickyourpoison.net

Zine World #21

The zinester's zine, this issue of *Zine World* includes an article on the countless amount of high schoolers being reprimanded/disciplined over writings published on the Internet. It's a scary, scary world. Other current first amendment violations are discussed as well as a whole lot of zine reviews, zine tips and related events. (AJA)

\$3 U.S./\$4 Canada, PO Box 330156, Murfreesboro, TN 37133, www.undergroundpress.org

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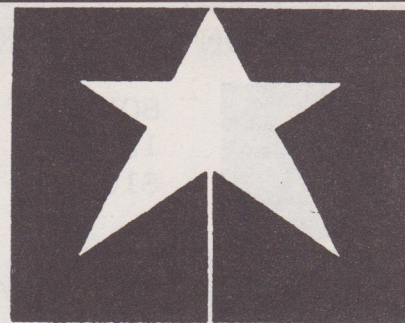
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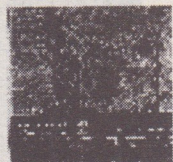
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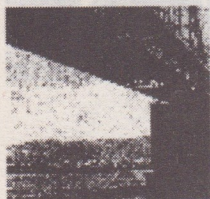
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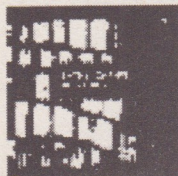
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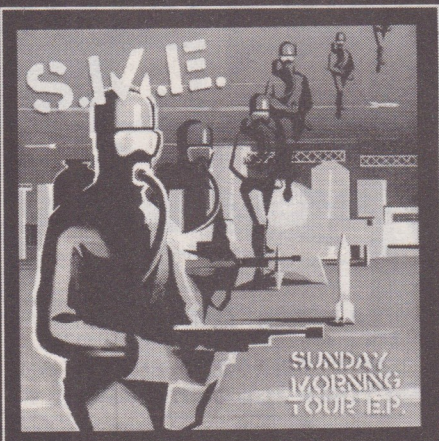
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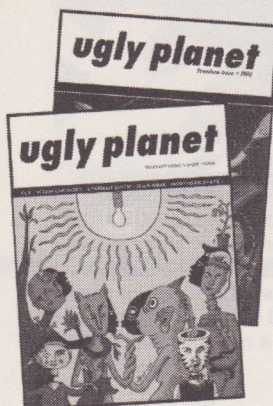
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see also

Where to find more information about this issue's features.

interviewed this issue:

Krist Novoselic

Krist has a small website dedicated to his ideas about electoral reform at www.fixour.us

Check out Krist's fantabulous new memoir/treatise, *Of Grunge and Government* at www.akashicbooks.com/rdvbooks.htm

For more about Instant Runoff Voting and super-districts go to the Center for Voting and Democracy's website: www.fairvote.org

The Blow

Khaela Maricich will the Blow you away: www.kreco.com/theblow

Pig Destroyer

The cute and huggable Pig Destroyer's latest album, *Terrifier*, is available from Relapse Records: www.relapse.com

Their website is coming to a computer near you very soon: www.roboticempire.com/~pigdestroyer

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Gasoline Fight

Please refrain from smoking while you visit Scott, Scotty, Stan and Fran: www.gasolinefight.com

Their EP, *Useless Piece of Weaponry*, is available from Thick Records: www.thickrecords.com

Let Fury Have the Hour

The compulsively readable *Let Fury Have the Hour* is available now from Nation Books: www.nationbooks.org

Stephanie Sinclair

Go see Stephanie's many stunning photos, as well as a weblog of her travels: www.stephaniesinclair.com

Pilot to Gunner

MAYDAY!!! MAYDAY!!! You must learn more about Pilot to Gunner: www.pilottogunner.biz

Get Saved is available from Arena Rock Recording Company: www.arenarockrecordingco.com

articles in this issue:

Waiting for Rain

Nick Aron's amazing book, *Waiting for Rain: The Politics and Poetry of Drought in Northeast*

Brazil, of which Studs Turkel says "Rarely has any work so deeply touched, infuriated and, surprisingly, imbued me with such hope," is available from the University of Arizona press: www.uapress.arizona.edu

Safe Tonight

Interested in learning more about harm reduction? Here are a few links to get you started:

www.harmreduction.org

www.ihrproject.org

Young Women's Empowerment Project:
www.youarepriceless.org

Dancesafe: www.dancesafe.org

Mean Streak

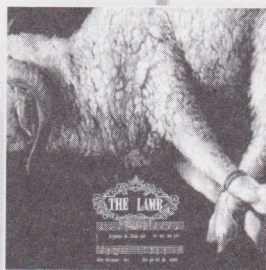
Joe Austin's *Taking the Train* is available from Columbia University Press:
www.columbia.edu/cu/cup

You can also find some more information on California's Youth Crime Initiative at the Northern California's ACLU's website:
www.aclunc.org

You might also want to check out this website:
www.schoolsnotjails.com

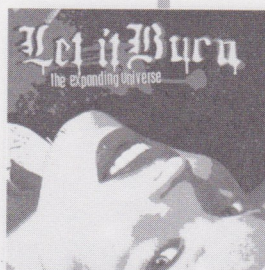
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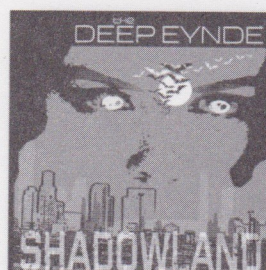
MI AMORE "LAMB"

Return with their follow up to 2002's "CrawlingKingSnake" with even more power and energy. Guest vocal appearances by Mike from Damnation AD, as well as Nate and Kurt from Converge.



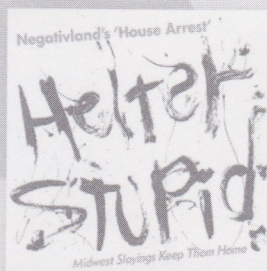
LET IT BURN "EXPANDING UNIVERSE"

New Jersey's finest. have managed to take the band's music to the next level, mixing sounds of traditional 80's punk and 90's Brit rock in a new and original way.



DEEP EYNDE "SHADOWLAND"

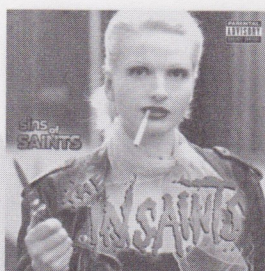
This is dark punk music So Cal style, with '80s new-wave vibes. Led by vocalist Joel Fatal Fatal (ex-KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN).



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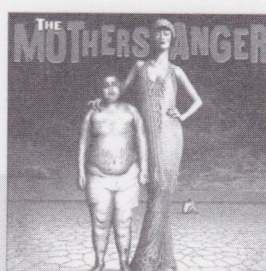
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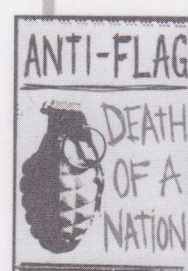
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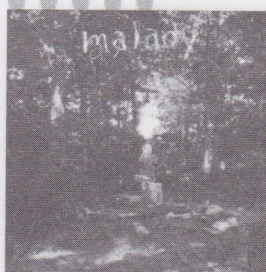
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ANTI-FLAG "DEATH OF A NATION"

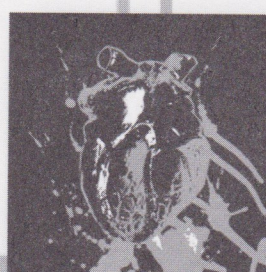
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A-T RECORDING



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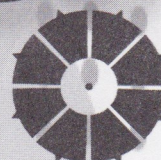
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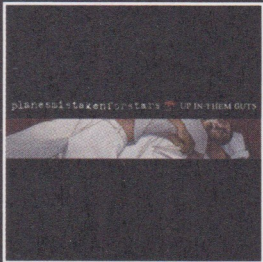
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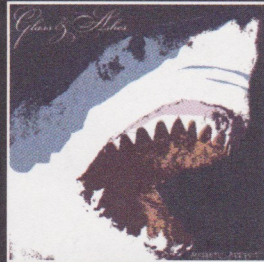
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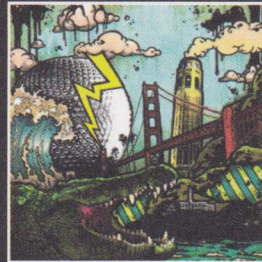
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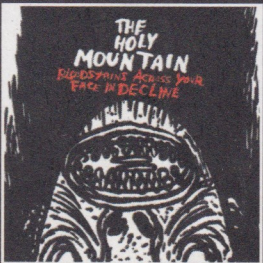
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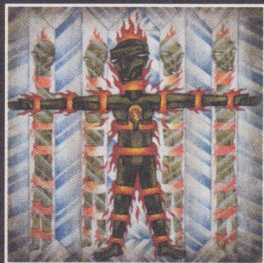
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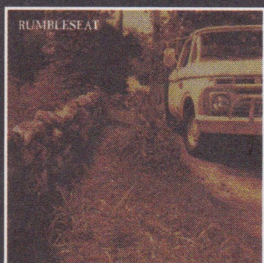
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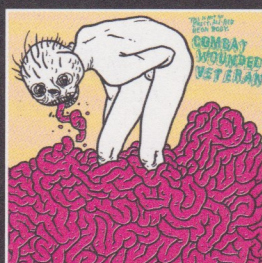
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BOMB** "Three Way Tie
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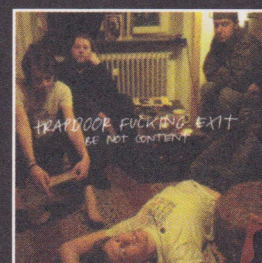
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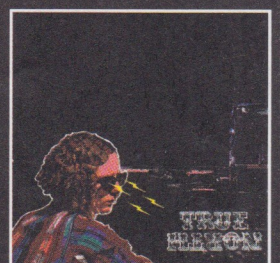
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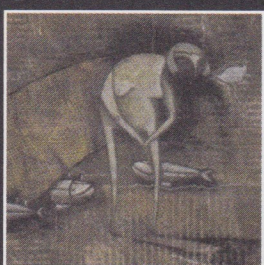
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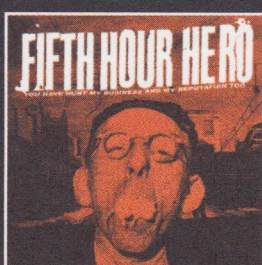
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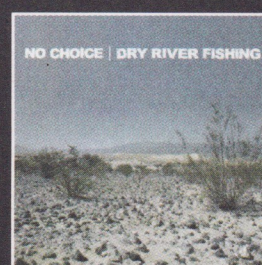
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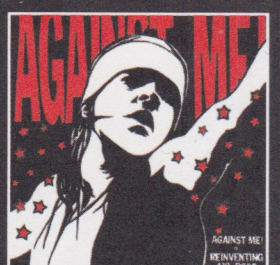
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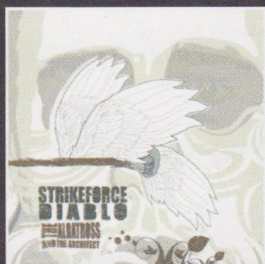
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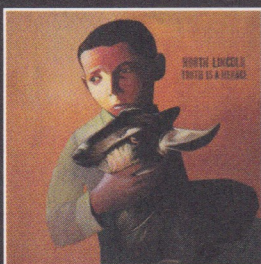
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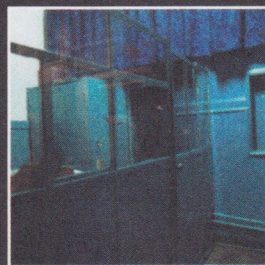
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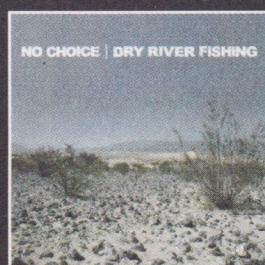
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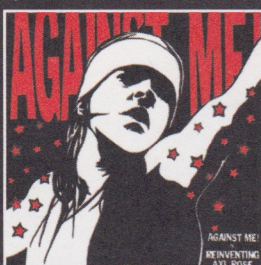
TRUE NORTH
"Somewhat
Similar" LP/CD



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..." 7"/CDep



NO CHOICE
"Dry River
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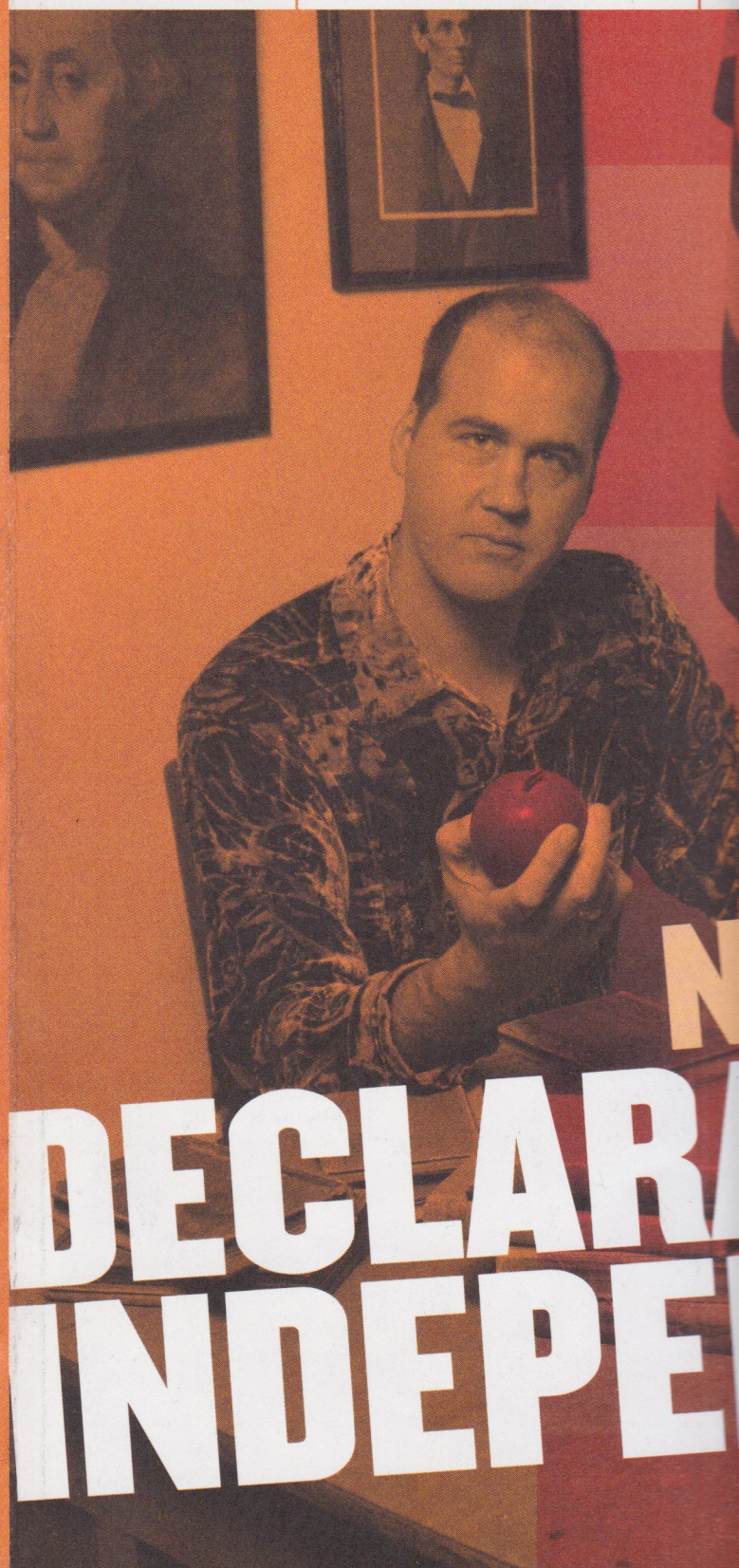
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"Punk rock didn't kill rock'n'roll, it gave it new life... Rock'n'roll is enduring; so is democracy." —KRIST NOVOSELIC